CHARLES BONYAN SMITH

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Early Years: 1891-1938

TROY, ALABAMA
1973

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The last country school I attended, 1908, at Rocky Hill School, seven miles west of Brantley. Teachers, Viola King and Ruth Harper. I am third from the left on the top row.

This schoolhouse was the scene of the April fool story. We were all punished for leaving school on April 1, 1901 at noon.

My picture at the age of 12 at the time I came to live with my grandfather following the accidental death of my father Isaac Smith.

The Normal School graduating class of 1917. I am second from the left on the bottom row.

Troy State Teachers College faculty in fall of 1937. I am fourth from the left on the bottom row.

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PREFACE

The aim of the story which follows is to depict some of the history of a region in terms of its impact on the life of one person. The region involved lies south of Montgomery, Alabama, west of the Flint River in Georgia, and east of the Alabama-Tombigbee River. A large portion of the territory lies in what local historians refer to as "wiregrass." Most of the land was originally covered with great forests of long leaf pine, and a thick growth of wire-like grass blanketed the earth beneath.

Historians also point out that this territory was actually the last frontier east of the Mississippi River. The migrants who first came into this last frontier and those who came later were poor people, as were nearly all the first settlers who came to Alabama. They came largely from the Piedmont sections of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, and many were descendents of Scotch-Irish and Scotch highlanders who had come earlier to the frontiers of these states. A few came directly from Scotland and Ireland to the south Alabama section; only a small number were well-to-do tidewater people.

Migrants to the Late Frontier

Our southeastern region of the United States is still the poorest section of America and has its peculiar characteristics. Whatever the faults and virtues this region possesses are exemplified, accentuated, and intensified in this my native section. My life in the region is what I shall report.

Although the backwoods isolation, hard work, and poverty all played a part after I was born into it, there were influences coming from the culture of my forebears themselves. So I shall present a few of them to illustrate the kinds of people they were. At times I shall indicate how their traits contributed to my own in rather specific ways, and how these traits were both hurtful and helpful.

It may be possible also to see that what the region is today is rooted in the elements making up the beginnings. Historians have agreed that a moving frontier produces certain characteristics in frontier people; and it appears that a frontier fed by migrants from Scotland, Ireland, and England produced its own special type of frontiersman. If our frontier had been fed by migrants from Spain or Japan, another type society would have been produced. What the early settler brought with him was a determining factor in what our particular frontier and post frontier became.

INTRODUCTION

My immediate forebears were among the early arrivals in this late frontier; but they migrated from other frontier territory. Most of them moved from one new territory to another. In writing my story I must take account of whatever influence this ancestral background might have had on my development. I shall, therefore, present a brief description of some of these people, taking the paternal side first.

The Smiths, who were Scotch-Irish, came from North Carolina to Alabama with intervening stops in Georgia, as was the case with many migrants to Alabama from older states. There is evidence that the Smiths came from Cumberland County, North Carolina, to Fayette County, Georgia. The story is that only a log cabin stood in the area where Atlanta is today when the family came through. Fayette County is just south of where Atlanta is situated.

Certain parts of the story indicate a conclusion of importance. Apparently, these Smith migrants were livestock people; they operated in the backwoods in the edge of the Piedmont all the way down and finally sought the pine covered ranges of the wiregrass country of the coastal plains. One young lady of the family of Smiths walked the last migration and drove the sheep, according to family tradition.

My paternal progenitor among these migrants was my great grandfather, Isaac Smith, born in North Carolina in 1805. His

six children were born in Georgia between 1836 and 1847. In 1860 he had already reached Alabama and was living in Coffee County. This part of the country had few settlers until the 1850's; he was therefore still a backwoodsman.

One of Isaac's sons, Joshua Smith, went to the Confederate Army from Alabama. On his return he married Mary Jane Grisset of Spring Hill, Pike County. The records indicate that Joshua lived in Florida near Milton between the time of his marriage and 1880. Three of his children, Emma, Letha, and Isaac, were born in Florida.

About 1888 Joshua came into Crenshaw, still a sparsely settled area. He became a neighbor of Henry David Brunson, my mother's father. In 1890 Isaac Bryan Smith married Ida Emma Brunson and I was their first born. The historian would note that at least four generations of this family were living on a frontier--in the backwoods.

Several families on my mother's side who came to southeast Alabama reach back to colonial times. The forebears of Henry David Brunson, originally Brownson, migrated from Connecticut about 1690 when the Lords Proprietors of the Carolinas advertised for immigrants in New England and in the British Isles. As a consequence, South Carolina had what was referred to in that state as "the Puritan Migration"; and the Brunsons were among these Puritans who, along with the Huguenots, added a special flavor to the culture of South Carolina. My great great grandfather, David Brunson, came to Clark County, Alabama, about 1815 from Sumter District, South Carolina. Available information

indicates that this man was a typical frontiersman, having put together his own wagon for the trip. The journey from Sumter District to Clark County consumed a whole year.

David's son, Josiah, and son-in-law, Barnette Franklin, were employed by the Cahaba Land Office as surveyors to run the land lines following the Creek Indian War in order that settlers might purchase land. They were paid off in land and the Brunson and Franklin families moved in 1828 from Clark to lands chosen in old Pike County. Their post office was Rutledge, Alabama, in what is now Crenshaw County.

Another family, the Fannins, should be mentioned because they belonged to a large clan whose name appears frequently in frontier history. They were also Scotch-Irish. My mother's grandfather on the maternal side was Jacob Sherwood Fannin who married Maranda DeLoache of Huguenot extraction. They married in Mount Willing, Edgefield District, South Carolina, December 25, 1833. The couple came to Coffee County, Alabama, immediately, where public land was still available. Jacob and Maranda were living in Coffee Springs, Alabama, in 1850 and had accumulated a large family, one member being my maternal grandmother, Martha Fannin Brunson.

Two contrasts operated between my mother's people and my father's people. Historians have pointed out the difference between South Carolina and North Carolina immigrants to Alabama. They describe the settlers from South Carolina as being better educated and more cultured than those who came from North

Carolina, although nearly all were poor people seeking land and opportunity. This contrast is vividly exemplified between the two sides of my family. Among the Brunsons and Fannins were teachers and a minister or two. They were all supporters of and believers in education. I attribute these attitudes in part to the New England influence of the Puritans who came to South Carolina; there doubtless were other influences recognized by historians.

The differences between the Smiths and my mother's people were also accentuated by some inherent traits not attributable to the structure of the migration. These contrasts verging on actual conflict definitely influenced my life.

These Were Piedmont People

The fact that my people were from the Piedmont and largely Scotch-Irish, but also partly Huguenot and Puritan English, has great significance in appraising influence on my outlook, ideals, and personal traits. "The hilly region between the fall line and the Blue Ridge was the cradle of the typical American pioneer," said one historian. (Eaton: History of the Old South) And when I read this same historian's description of these people, I find I can use the same words to describe the Smith relatives. "The Scotch-Irish had strongly marked characteristics that made them admirably suited to being the cutting edge of the frontier. Tall, angular, with jutting chins and forceful countenances, they were noted for their fighting qualities, their tenacity of will, and their practicality. They were self-reliant and devoted to

principal . . . often lacked humor, demonstrativeness, and appreciation of aesthetic qualities," says Eaton. Nearly all of this description fits perfectly my paternal ancestors, as well as many on the maternal side.

Chapter I

TWELVE YEARS OF WANDERING ABOUT

On the day I was born, June 5, 1891, the administration of Benjamin Harrison as president of the United States had twenty months to go. The greatly unsettled times, which I shall describe, account for the moving about from place to place that I experienced during my first twelve years. Although these years included what is referred to as the "gay nineties," that period definitely was not one of gaiety for the Wiregrass people.

I was born in the Wiregrass county of Geneva. The place of my birth was sixteen miles from Dothan, Alabama, the Houston County seat. This would put the location near Slocomb or Malvern. Whether there was a lack of doctors or of means to get one is not clear, but a colored midwife presided over the event.

The unsettled times and poverty itself furnish the explanation in general of the many moves my parents made between the time I was born and my father's death in December 1902. It was always their intention to settle down, own land and other property, and bring up the family. It was, however, this very itinerancy that left me with indelible impressions of people and things in this wild and partially settled country. Because of

the possible profound effects upon my development, I believe a somewhat detailed account of these migrations should be given.

Back and Forth to Georgia

My grandfather, Henry David Brunson, rescued us from Geneva County just after I was born and brought the family back to Crenshaw County, but we did not stay. In 1893 we were farming again near Bainbridge, Georgia. It should be recorded that farming in those days in the region being described consisted of cultivation of only one marketable crop which was cotton; a farmer nearly always raised corn only to feed his mules and hogs. Many raised a few hogs for home consumption but not for sale. The more provident farmers had milk cows to produce milk for the family. They also had gardens and chickens. Many in the upper Wiregrass had moved into cotton farming and away from full time cattle raising on the ranges by the time my parents came along. In much of that coastal Wiregrass, however, raising cattle and sheep on the range continued far into the 20th Century.

My childhood recollections begin very vaguely with this farming at Bainbridge. This was in 1893 and 1894 and according to the record was in the midst of the 1893 Cleveland panic, which I heard discussed throughout my childhood and youth. According to the history books it was the worst the nation had experienced up to that date and lasted through 1898. This panic, plus the fact that farmers and other working people had been outside the stream of prosperity since the Civil War, explains why my young

parents spent all their married life in a desperate economic struggle without getting started toward economic security.

Next to tobacco farming, cotton culture is the most laborious. The cotton crop was planted in March and often the picking went on until Christmas. Children were kept out of school to pick cotton. In most families, men, women, and children worked in the fields during the crop season. Only the few big planters could afford tenants or hired hands to do all the work.

A Plan That Did Not Work

By 1894 Isaac and Ida had run aground a second time and my grandfather, Henry David Brunson, again stepped into our affairs. He possessed a homestead of 160 acres on which he was not living. He proposed that if Isaac and Ida would settle down permanently he would deed them forty acres and let them use and live on the 160 acres. The proposition was accepted.

What the exact situation was when this proposition was made, I cannot remember; I was too young. I remember when we landed at the homestead of my grandfather Brunson. I clearly picture the large grove of chestnut trees surrounding the log house. My mother raked the fallen leaves into piles and we found stray chestnuts.

It was at this time that I first became acquainted with my maternal grandfather, Henry D. Brunson. He was a great contrast to my grandfather Joshua Smith whom I first knew and who lived

with us at Bainbridge. He showed up for a visit a few days after we moved into the homestead. He was a tall, handsome man of forty-eight; he wore chin whiskers. Having become a widower in 1891, he lived with his aged mother and older sister on the adjoining homestead. My brother and I were his first grandchildren, and he visited us every few days. His visits were exciting to us. He rode the youngest on his knees and sang funny songs: "Old Dan Tucker," who got a coal in his shoe; Stephen Foster's song, "On My Way to Louisiana With a Banjo on My Knee." Sometimes he sang a sad song about Lillie Dale. His attentions to his grandchildren were in great contrast to anything of the kind on the other side of the family.

Soon he began to slip me away to spend the night at his home. This was the beginning of a favoritism on his part that continued through the years. Being a great hunter of game for the table as well as for sport, he took me with him frequently to "turn the squirrel." This activity means to go around the tree and cause the squirrel to move toward the hunter. This special attention built up an early and strong attachment on my part to my grandfather which superseded any attachment to relatives on the Smith side of the family.

These visits to Henry David Brunson's home during this one year created a clear impression of several things. He read a newspaper at night in front of a log fire. Our family did not take a paper. The food was plentiful, good, and entirely homemade. Guineas, geese, hens, and turkeys filled the yards

with their characteristic noises. It was at this early time in my life that I began to sense clearly the contrast between the two sides of the family. This grandfather paid a great deal more attention to me than my own Scotch-Irish father, and I had no such kindly and affectionate relationship with my grandfather Joshua Smith. The Smith father and grandfather loved their children and grandchildren, but the Scotch-Irish lack of demonstrativeness kept them from excessive overt expressions of their affections.

On the Move Again

The family did not find permanence here after all. I retain a picture in my mind of being lifted onto the top of a wagon loaded with household goods. We were moving again. Things had not worked out right. In later years I heard the story in general. The crops would not pay the debts to the creditor, Mr. Math Wright. Prices had collapsed as the history books now verify. In fact, my grandfather Brunson saved the land from foreclosure which evidently had also been mortgaged for credit. A deed showed up and revealed that the homestead really belonged to my young maternal uncle and had been falsely presented as collateral to Mr. Wright. Since my uncle, Thomas F. Brunson, owed nothing to the furnishing merchant, the land was not taken for debt. For some reason all regarded this ever afterwards as a neat trick on the part of my grandfather, who was also a Justice of the Peace and knew how to write a land

deed. It is an interesting observation that the ethics of this deal were never questioned by any of the family.

This one year on my grandfather's place left permanent attitudes in my heart. He showed obvious favoritism toward me above the other boys. (At present I think that was wrong in several ways; and I have avoided this myself as a grandparent.) I carried away definite recollections of my great grandmother and Aunt Betty, her daughter. I retain recollections of good things to eat, warm hardwood fire in the hearth, a very deep well, and geese, turkeys, guineas, and chickens around the homestead. Here was stability and permanency, and it made an impression on my budding consciousness.

Into Farming and Out Again

Why we chose to settle thirteen miles away at Host, now called Burnt Out, I do not know. We rented a farm from Mr. Sill Thomasson near Burnt Out in 1896; the place was called Host in those days. A crop was planted and eventually cotton picking time came. Although still below school age, I recall new developments. Before the crop was fully harvested, Isaac had bought a saw mill. Uncle Lewis Smith showed up with a new wife, the former Hester Hobbs. He was to become a partner in the saw mill operations. Operations continued for some months and we moved away from the farm to the site of the saw mill.

The saw milling suddenly ceased and we moved to Geneva, Alabama, near where I was born six years before, I learned many years later that the creditor in Troy, Alabama, had foreclosed

Isaac. The lumber business had failed. Uncle Lewis and my grandfather and grandmother Smith were with us in Geneva. Isaac and Lewis were employed at a brick-making plant at Eunola, a suburb of Geneva. They were now wage earners instead of proprietors of a saw mill.

In Eunola we lived within sight of a one room schoolhouse. I watched the children come and go with great curiosity. I saw them playing at recess periods and heard the school bell many times during the day.

Christmas, 1896, at Burnt Out

Not much attention was given to celebrating Christmas by pioneer country people in those days. Some even continued with their work, even on Christmas day. Some who liked alcoholic beverages supplied themselves for the occasion and imbibed more than usual. More affluent families perhaps served Christmas dinner to visiting kin.

The Christmas of 1896 at Host was the first time any attention was given to this holiday in our family that I can remember. The four boys received candy, soda crackers, an apple or two, and perhaps some wearing apparel. Other Christmases will be noted as we move along with the story.

Soon we were not manufacturing brick, but were in the crosstie business. At least we were hauling crossties and had moved again to Campbellton, Florida. On our way we passed Florala, Alabama, and I viewed my first large body of water, McDade's pond. My Smith grandparents and Uncle Lewis continued

with us into Florida. For some reason still unknown to me, the crosstie business also ceased. A new and long move was projected.

Chapter II

MY SECOND SOJOURN IN GEORGIA

In December 1897, we were on our way back to Georgia, this being the third time my parents had gone to Georgia since they married and the second sojourn for me. We traveled on two wagons and camped out at night . . . high adventure to me. We passed through many miles of large virgin pine timber. Here I saw my first turpentine boxes cut into these pine trees. Only a few dogwood trees grew beneath this tall timber, and great expanses of wiregrass covered the ground. Our destination was Iron City, Georgia, where Isaac's brother-in-law, Forest W. Cordell, lived. Our arrival at night was a surprise to the Cordells, but we were cordially received and put up for the night.

This was my first acquaintance with my aunt, Letha Smith Cordell, and her husband. This acquaintance through the years had its effects upon my attitudes and awareness. Cordell had inherited his land from his homesteading father and was moving toward the status of the planter type of operator. I sensed the contrast between this uncle's operations and those of Isaac and my uncle Lewis Smith. My uncle Forest did no manual labor, but devoted his time to management and some business in the little town of Iron City. Aunt Letha was beautiful, with fair skin,

very blue eyes, and light brown hair. Although fond of jewelry and fine clothes, she was without culture. I soon detected some incompatibility between her and her tall handsome husband, even though I was only six years old.

Christmas, the second in my recollections, came a few days after we arrived and we ate oranges. The Cordells had relatives in Florida who had sent them a crate of oranges, the first I had ever eaten. At the Cordell's I found three cousins, Albert, Jesse, and Maude. Although I had cousins elsewhere, the idea of having cousins my own age was interesting.

I Enter School

Soon we were settled in a house on the Cordell plantation, and Isaac helped with the planting that spring season. For ourselves, we planted only a garden and a potato patch; no land was available for a full crop that year. Again we had left timbering and saw milling and were in farming once more, this being the fourth time within my short pre-school memory.

Two important things happened this year: I entered school and the Spanish American War broke out. My brother John and I were old enough to go to school. We were so shy that our parents thought we should go by the Cordell house and join our cousins each morning. The oldest Cordell cousin, Jesse, was four or five years older than I, and he was expected to look after us.

The Corinth school had two men teachers who worked in one large, typical rural schoolhouse. The principal teacher first enrolled all pupils. The procedure was to call each student up

to his desk and ask the routine questions as to name, age, and the like. "What is your name?" he said. "Charlie," I responded. "Charlie what?" "Charlie Smith," I answered. "How old are you?" asked the teacher. "I do not know," was my answer. I had probably forgotten my age. My cousin Jesse Cordell came to the rescue. The same dialogue was repeated with my brother John who also had the help of Jesse. Returning to our seats, we were so bewildered that we sat down on the girls' side and caused a general twitter which deeply embarrassed us. Girls and boys, of course, sat on opposite sides of the school room.

In this school and at this time reading was taught by the alphabet method. The beginner was expected, as his first task, to learn to recognize each of the twenty-six letters of the alphabet. He then moved on to spelling as the second step in learning to read. We took spelling books to school on the first day and not readers. The alphabet was on the first page. The beginner sat at his desk and supposedly studied the alphabet between classes.

Before this year was out, my first baby sister was born. She was named Emma Belle for one aunt on each side of the family, Aunt Emma Smith and Beulah Belle Brunson.

The family remained on the Cordell plantation only the remainder of the year 1898. For some reason, Isaac and Uncle Lewis Smith agreed to farm with a nearby planter for the year 1899.

My brother John and I continued in the same school. Although we had been to school the year before, my grandmother Mary Jane Smith accompanied us on the first day. Our teachers, as previously, were men. My progress in school was quite satisfactory, but my brother John moved slowly in his books. He could not move forward until he learned the alphabet, and this task he found uninteresting.

We Learn to Work

Isaac, being a great believer in work, as the Scotch-Irish were, thought the boys should learn how to work. So in the hot August sunshine and humidity of 1899 the two of us helped pull fodder, although neither could reach higher on the corn stalk than the ear of corn. We performed with no enthusiasm--in fact, with great distaste. I was learning to do manual labor but failing entirely to learn to like work of that kind. The philosophy was that boys like us should learn to work and not be like certain neighbors who never had anything because they would not work. This was strictly a type of Scotch-Irish philosophy working itself out.

First Serious Illness in Family

During the summer of 1899, the little one year old sister Emma Belle became ill of typhoid fever. The doctor came everyday for a long time. There was great anxiety, but she pulled through and the doctor stopped his visits. But late one afternoon I observed my young mother sitting on the doorsteps

with the child in a cradle nearby. She had tears in her eyes. She was waiting for Isaac to come in from the fields to tell him the child had fever again. A relapse was indicated, but the fever went away again. Such moods on my mother's part saddened and distressed me and left deep, lasting impressions. And I was vaguely aware even then that such illnesses, among other things, kept us poor.

Race Troubles

Once during the same summer of 1899 race troubles sprang up over a single incident; a young Negro went into the house of Taylor Drake. According to the report, he scuffled with Mrs. Drake who was the only person at home, but he did not harm her otherwise. A posse was formed and my father joined it and was away for several days. The rumor spread that the Negro was caught by the posse and hanged near Iron City less than a mile from where we lived, but I am not sure that this was a true account. There was another story that the mob threatened to hang my uncle Forest W. Cordell, a member of the posse, who was suspected of knowing where the fugitive was. This would indicate that the sheriff took possession of the man and the mob failed to get him.

The biased talk and excitement, I can see now, was not wholesome for children. For some days we captured lizards and grasshoppers and hanged them with thread to dramatize the story we had heard. Cruelty was created in our hearts.

Becoming Aware

I made better than normal progress in school, although I probably did not attend as much as four months during a year. At this period of my life I went to school willingly but apparently did not insist on going; I did not worry if I had to stay out. I liked Taylor Drake, the assistant teacher who taught me to read.

By this time I had become conscious of many human relationships and contrasts. My year's acquaintance with my maternal grandfather and his people made me aware of differences between these two families, the Brunsons and the Smiths. This awareness grew through the years and had its permanent harmful effects on my emotional growth. My aunt Beulah Belle Brunson was the opposite of my aunt Letha Smith Cordell; and, as recorded elsewhere, my grandfather Joshua Smith was on the opposite end of the scale from my grandfather Henry David Brunson. I already preferred the Brunson side and was their favorite.

As heretofore related, Grandpa Brunson loved his grandchildren and paid great attention to them. He read the newspapers and, although being far from devout, he read the Bible and even read with great interest Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan. He gave me my second name as a result of his perusal of Pilgrim's Progress. He took an interest in political campaigns and continued as a Justice of the Peace.

On the other hand, my Grandpa Smith exhibited none of these habits or traits. In the first place he was afflicted with

palsy or St. Vitus Dance which interfered slightly with his speech. Although he lived with us off and on or near us with Uncle Lewis Smith until I was ten years old, I cannot recall a single conversation with him. He read nothing and I never heard him discuss current affairs. Evidently his affliction had already retired him from farming. Previously I was told that he had farmed on a rather large scale, including the operation of a cotton gin. He made great debts in farming and paid them off annually.

I became aware that the Smiths had no professional leanings whatever. They were all given to hard physical labor but with an ardent ambition to acquire and own property. Although Grandpa Smith bought several farms during his lifetime, he never succeeded in completing the purchase. Hard times, physical affliction, and old age caught up with him; he became dependent and a problem. His descendants will judge him and some others of his day more kindly when they study the times through which they lived. As other Scotch-Irish people did, his forebears first went to the North Carolina Piedmont and then to the Georgia frontier where Joshua was born in 1842. By 1861 he was a young man in Coffee County, Alabama, and was the right age to join the Confederate Army where he spent four years. From 1866 to the late 1880's he brought up his family, thus living through Reconstruction, the Panic of 1873, the farm troubles of the 1880's, and into the turbulent times of the second Cleveland administration. All considered, he did quite well; few Wiregrass people did better.

Chapter III

THE YEAR 1900 AND MUCH SADNESS

We returned to the Cordell farm in 1900. Uncle Lewis Smith remained with the Goodwins. We produced an enormous crop of cotton, corn, sugar cane, peanuts, and hogs. Part of this went to Cordell for the rent. I made the observation that although Isaac worked from sun-up and before until after sun-down each day, my Uncle Forest did no physical labor at all. He drove into Iron City each day on his buggy and back in the late afternoon. Although he did no regular farm labor, he liked to feed his hogs in the evenings after coming home from town. Neither did my three cousins work in the fields. This caused me to admire my uncle rather than envy him; I sensed that Isaac was continually trying to get ahead in life. The contrast nevertheless had its effects on my nine year old heart and mind.

By this time my brother and I were considered old enough to do light work steadily on the farm. We picked up trash and fallen limbs in the spring in order that plowing might begin. The land had been cleared by cutting away the smaller growth and "deadening" the numerous larger trees. As the trees died and rotted, great amounts of falling debris covered the ground in the spring. For several years this trash must be cleared. The work was sheer drudgery.

The First Deep Sorrow

It was in the late fall of this year 1900 that the first death occurred in our family. Our little four year old brother became ill. Vividly I recall that he was out with us while we picked cotton when suddenly he ran for the house. When we went home for the midday meal, he was swinging on my mother's skirts as she set the table and he was crying desperately. I observed that he was blue around the mouth and I wondered if my mother had noticed the fact. She did not appear disturbed at the time but was hurrying rather desperately to get the midday meal on the table.

The child was put to bed that afternoon. Soon the doctor came and he kept coming everyday for nearly a month. The adults never told us he was going to die. I recall that I suspected something terrible but suppressed the idea. Our Grandpa Brunson came to see us, but it was not indicated that he came because of the child's illness. His presence overcame all else for me. I was allowed to sleep with him; the other children were not; and today I think this was very bad. During the day he entertained us to keep us away from the house, obviously for the sake of the sick child. He fired up a great fallen tree; and, since it was near Christmas, he bought small fire crackers for us to light at the fire. We went on some walks in the woods and to Donalsonville which was two miles away.

I have another clear-cut recollection of this visit. One day while we were in town he walked into the store where school

books were sold. Without saying a word he bought me a combined fourth and fifth year Baldwin's Reader. We had not been in school at all that fall; evidently he was concerned about it. A few days later he announced that he would take the train for home the next morning at four. This was extremely distressing to me. But he arose long before daylight to walk to town to meet the train. I wept on his pillow after he left.

A few days later little Emmett died. The other children were completely unprepared, and all of us went into a panic. The stark reality of death floored us completely. The next day he was buried at Corinth Church one mile from Iron City, Georgia, but in the meantime we recovered our composure. My nine year old mind was still observant. When we arrived home from the burial and the wagon stopped in front, my mother continued to sit in the seat. Tears welled up in her eyes, I noticed. She was sensing the vacancy she would find on going into the small house again. My father gazed at her also with tearful eyes. Thus passed our first great sorrow. At this early age I was very sensitive to the moods of my mother.

Before little Emmett became ill, the plan had been to leave Cordell's again and rent a farm near Donalsonville, about two miles away. The operation was to be larger, requiring one tenant farmer. The larger aim was later to buy the farm. The baby's illness had delayed the move; but it was rapidly consummated and 1901 came to bring more significant experiences to my childhood.

The Very Full Year of 1901

The new year in the new place was begun with great enthusiasm. To my childish mind we were now settled down for good; we would stop moving and have our own farm. Two fine mules and a wagon were bought and a Negro tenant called Major was placed in the log cabin tenant house. He soon married a young woman named Lulu whom he called Pet. So fond were the children of Major and Pet that it was difficult to keep us away from the cabin.

Soon after we moved to the new place, a private school was organized nearby. The three boys were enrolled, although my second brother Jesse was only five years old. Only nine and one-half years old, I took my fourth and fifth reader to school. I experienced no thrill at the idea of attending school; nor do I recall any objection. I record this observation because the time came in my life when going to school was a greater source of delight than anything else. The school building was a single room log house with a blackboard at one end and a fireplace at the other. We burned wood in the fireplace. The teacher was a young man, Will Brinson.

My Only Whipping at School

It was April 1, 1901, that I learned the significance of that day of the year. Early in the morning it was suggested that we run away at noon. I had never before heard that some pupils thought it fun to play an "April Fool" on the teacher by leaving school on "All Fools' Day." My response to the idea was

completely in the negative; such a thing sounded very wrong to me. I heard no more talk about the idea until the last ten minutes of the noon hour. I was deeply involved in cat ball when someone ran up and said, "Let's go." The teacher had gone inside. I promptly dropped my bat and moved with the crowd in complete cooperation. My brother John also joined but the five year old was left behind, the only pupil the teacher had that afternoon. Strangely enough, my strong feeling of opposition to the prank earlier in the day was completely dissolved by the herd spirit. (I am sure now that this spirit on the part of children should be kept in mind when punishment for their misdeeds is under consideration.) During the early afternoon the girls weakened and returned to the school house. The boys stayed out longer but came trailing in later.

The idea prevailed in those days that he who sins must be punished. In spite of the fact that such a thing would never happen again, all were given thrashings before being dismissed. In spite of my alacrity in joining the April foolers, to me this little experience was very crushing, although four small raps were all it amounted to. Even as a ten year old I could see it was tearing our teacher's heart out. We related the story promptly on arriving later than usual at home. "We got a whipping." "We ran off from school," we reported. We received no sympathy whatever but only, "What did you run away for?" The oldest boy who promoted the prank was expelled from school by the trustees. He had sat with tears falling down his cheeks as we were thrashed, refusing to take his whipping.

Other Events of 1901

During this spring and summer Isaac's enthusiasm was high. Crops were planted, and I, being the oldest boy, dropped the corn and later helped with chopping and hoeing cotton.

I must keep pointing out my developing awareness of the contrasts and even conflicts between the paternal and maternal sides of my family. I was now ten years old and had lived with the people on each side of the family from time to time all along. As the record to this point shows, I had already developed a preference for my mother's people and all of them made a practice of showing a certain favoritism toward me. Even then it appeared to me that the Brunson side had more sense and was less crude and better informed. As years went by, the effects on my emotional development were perceptible and in the long run not wholesome.

During the spring of 1900 my Grandfather Brunson came over from Alabama to visit us. Other relatives from that side of the family came during the following months. One was my mother's oldest sister, Jimmie Brunson, and before she completed her stay my favorite aunt, Belle Brunson, came over. Then came my mother's only brother, Thomas Fletcher Brunson. He brought with him a bicycle; this mode of travel was much in vogue then with men and women. Uncle Tom at that time had begun to teach school and all the family were very proud of him. All of these visits were real events in my life.

My grandfather, being an outdoor man, showed us how to make a log raft to navigate the great, dark cypress ponds nearby. It was a great adventure to push out through the giant trees which completely overshadowed the water and to spy cranes, pond gannets, snapping turtles, and now and then a moccasin. Fish were also abundant, but we did not experiment with fishing. We were unhappy when Grandpa, after a few weeks, left us to return home to Alabama.

Harvest time came; the crops had been good. Extra cotton pickers were hired; cotton was hauled to a Donalsonville gin. All seemed prosperous.

Grandpa Smith is Sent Away in May 1901

My Smith grandparents were still near us during this sojourn in Georgia. We saw them constantly because Grandma Mary Jane Smith visited us frequently. These grandparents lived with Uncle Lewis Smith, but there were problems here.

Joshua Smith, mainly because of his St. Vitus Dance, became an increasingly difficult problem. Most of the time during the Georgia years he had lived with Uncle Lewis. His palsy got worse; he developed a nutrition disease, and at times became violent. Although I heard little of the discussion, it was decided to send him to Milledgeville to the hospital for the insane, despite the fact that he was not really insane. I retain to this day a mental picture of Grandpa Smith sitting in the two-horse wagon in front of our gate waiting to be taken to the train at Donalsonville. This was my last look at this

unfortunate relative. How much pity my ten year old heart felt for him is not clear. A few weeks later in the midst of new trouble, a telegram came from Milledgeville telling us that he had died. Under the circumstances no one could go to Milledgeville. The hospital explained that the doctors wanted to make an autopsy, and this was the reason he was not sent home for burial. Grandma Smith happened to be at our house when word came, and my heart was troubled to see her shedding tears. To me it was disturbing that she could not go to Milledgeville. She was not financially able to make the long trip on the train.

Timber and Crossties Again

During the summer lull my father began to produce crossties for the railroads. This was the third time that I could remember in my short life that Isaac had left farming to go into the timber business. Then came the discussion of a big contract to furnish crossties for a new railroad being built to Graceville, Florida. A camp for tie cutters was soon set up at Bainbridge, Georgia. Isaac bought a horse and buggy to make travel to the camp easier. I was taken on a day and night trip to the camp. A large crew of Negro cutters were at the little commissary that night. Uncle Lewis Smith accompanied us on the twenty-five miles to Bainbridge and back. While at camp that evening I heard them say that President McKinley had been shot. This was on September 6, 1901.

Farming faded into the background. The tenants and harvesters were puzzled. Some rumors of difficulties spread.

The railroad building was to be discontinued, we heard. A little later trouble with the furnishing merchant and the law developed. A telegram was sent to my grandfather Henry David Brunson, worded in such a way as to make him think my mother was seriously ill. My ten year old mind could not take it all in, but I was glad Grandpa might come. He did come but he stayed only a short time. I did not know what help he gave at that stage of development; it is possible that his legal advice was desired. He became very important a few weeks later. This is another instance of his coming to our aid in trouble.

The rumor spread that we were going to move; this brought inquiring officers. Soon I heard that Isaac was actually arrested and brought to the house one night with Charlie Hobbs, the manager of the crosstie camp. The story was that Hobbs and Isaac were permitted to go into the kitchen for a bite to eat. The officers waited by the living room fire. Hobbs and Isaac ate and conversed. Then Hobbs conversed alone because Isaac had slipped out into the dark night to escape the officers.

A few days later the creditor merchant came out and took the things he had a mortgage on. The family went to the home of Uncle Lewis Smith while plans were completed for us to board the Atlantic Coastline train back to Alabama to seek refuge with Grandpa Brunson again. The journey was made as Christmas day approached. Thus ended 1901, a year which began with great hopes and prospects, but ended with us empty-handed, disappointed, and humiliated.

Chapter IV

THE NOMADIC YEAR OF 1902 AND TRAGEDY

Grandpa Brunson met my mother and her six children in Brantley at the 8:00 p.m. train. We spent the first few days at the house of my mother's sister, Mrs. F. D. Peek. Isaac also met the wagon before we reached my aunt's house five miles from Brantley. He had naturally made his way back to Alabama on the night he slipped away and was looking for his family to join him there.

Under the circumstances, plans were difficult to make, but Grandpa Brunson took charge of us. Within a few days, he took us by wagon to Goodman, Alabama, where there was another community of Smith relatives. We settled in a house on the place owned by a cousin, Bud Smith. It appeared Isaac would farm there; and he actually began in the early spring. Then some disagreement was developed and the idea was dropped. Grandpa Brunson was notified by letter and came again to see about us in the early spring of 1902.

Within a few days we were traveling by wagon to a farm near Sellersville and about two miles from Marl Station on the Coast Line. Grandpa remained with us several weeks, to my great joy. He stayed long enough to build a house for a nearby farmer. Isaac declined to farm the Sellers place, probably because he

could not secure credit from any of the furnishing merchants. He assisted Grandpa on the house and then found work in a sawmill.

Because we did not choose to farm, the boys had many days to play. The spring of 1902 for a while was very pleasant. The woods around the large farm house on the Sellers place were very picturesque; we explored them daily as the trees put on leaves and spring burst forth. A short distance away on Double Bridges Creek was a mill pond and an old fashioned grist mill, where I frequently took corn bought from a local farmer to be ground into meal.

After leaving the sawmill Isaac found different types of work during the spring and summer, some of it being of a kind with which boys could help. For awhile he contracted to haul lumber from a nearby sawmill to the railroad, thus making it necessary to buy a team of oxen. This did not pay off so he shifted to cutting cord wood for the railroad. The boys helped with both.

Isaac did not cease to be uneasy that he would be hauled back to Donalsonville by the law, although he was living in Alabama and not Georgia. So he decided to move again. This time we did not seek the aid of Grandpa Brunson. Isaac went off for a few days and came back with plans to move to Ashford, to the place of Henry Killingsworth four miles from Ashford. This farmer was a former acquaintance of Isaac. Killingsworth, of course, would bear the expense of moving to the new situation

and furnish a house for us. Isaac had contracted to harvest the crop for Killingsworth. This meant mainly picking his cotton and hauling it to be ginned.

During this late summer and fall period at Killingsworth's, my third brother Rossie Harvey had typhoid fever. He was two years old. Such sickness added to our expenses and caused great anxiety; it was the second case of typhoid in the family. Fortunately this case turned out to be light.

Another Move is Planned

Before many weeks of strenuous work had gone by, Isaac conceived an idea entirely inconsistent with his previous uneasiness about his Donalsonville creditors. We should go back to Georgia, he said. I could see, as an eleven year old, that my mother was not favorably inclined toward the idea. Killingsworth had plans for us for the next year and remaining with him had been discussed at length. I could see that my mother leaned toward remaining in Alabama. On the other hand, when Isaac contemplated farming, he always felt the urge to go where the farm land was best. Anyway Isaac proposed to go and look things over. We had been away from Georgia for a little less than a year. Isaac apparently had lost his fear of the law from which he had escaped a few months previously.

Isaac made a week's trip to Iron City and the Cordell plantation. He returned with a firm agreement to settle again on the rich soil of the plantation. Again it was talked that our wanderings would be ended; we would now settle permanently.

So in early November 1902, we took the Coast Line train at Ashford for Iron City. Soon we were at home in one of the large houses on the Cordell farm. My Uncle Lewis Smith was then on this farm with his brother-in-law and was engaged in harvesting a large crop of sugar cane for manufacturing syrup. We fell to helping him. Our task was to cut the cane and get it to the syrup mill. Uncle Lewis made the syrup in a large hundred gallon kettle.

Soon Isaac and Lewis swapped jobs and we took over the mill; Isaac "bought him out." My personal job was to feed the cane mill; that is, grind the juice for the syrup kettle. The old fashioned roller mill was turned by a mule going round and round pulling the long pole or lever. The working day was 12 to 13 hours. I ground over 400 gallons of juice per day which made four boilings. I was 11 years old. The furnace was fired with cord wood, cut nearby.

Our Lives Are Suddenly Changed

On December 5 Isaac and Charlie Hobbs, our same old friend, went with a wagon team to bring in a supply of wood. An increasingly high wind was blowing that day, in fact a typical September hurricane was on. Soon Hobbs came running back to the sugar mill in great distress. He announced baldly, "A falling tree has killed your daddy. Go to the field and tell your Uncle Lewis." I moved up the slope to the Cordell house and met my aunt Letha Smith Cordell. I told her that a falling tree had hurt Isaac, thus indicating that either I had not accepted the

hard fact or that I did not want to shock my aunt too much. She was alarmed and proceeded onward to the mill. I ran to the cane field for Uncle Lewis, a mile away. I promptly found my uncle and told him the news. He made no answer whatever, but took his hat in his hand and ran at top speed toward the mill. I proceeded slowly behind him, but never found the courage to go to the scene of the accident. I went toward home. Before I reached the house another mile away, Uncle Lewis ran past me going to deliver the message to my mother himself. I knew then that this had been his aim from the time he left the field at a run. He was always fond of my mother and wanted to be present when she was told the news. He had gone by the scene first to ascertain the facts and then proceeded at top speed to our house. My immediate task at home was to take care of a six months old baby sister my mother had left to go to the scene of the accident.

The funeral was at Corinth church and cemetery, during which I seemed to escape into myself. My panic was completely over; I seemed to step outside the grief of others at this moment.

Soon discussion began as to what my mother would do; she was now a poor widow with six children ranging from six months to eleven years. The Smith relatives argued that she should remain in Georgia. Although I was only 11 years old, I knew she would not do this. The outcome was that Grandpa Brunson came to the rescue for the final time. We would return to Alabama and

live with him on his homestead where we were in 1895, seven years before; the same farm he had saved from the mortgage by a trick of doubtful ethics. To me this was like going to live in fairy land.

There were, however, some preliminaries. Uncle Lewis must take over the syrup making again. So all of us lived with him, and I continued to feed the cane mill. This work required me to get up on cold December mornings long before day and eat breakfast. Then Uncle Lewis and his 11 year old helper made their way across the fields before day with the aid of a lantern. Millions of dewdrops reflected the light of our lantern as we walked through the grassy fields to the Cordell syrup mill.

Without the aid of the lantern I made my way to the stables to bridle the mule to pull the cane mill. Before the sun came up the mule was going round and round and I was pushing in the frost-covered stalks of cane with naked hands. Some time after dark in the evening I would have my 400 gallons of juice and Uncle Lewis would have his two barrels of syrup.

As Christmas day 1902 approached, money and plans were in hand to take the Coast Line train to Troy, Alabama, and then the Central of Georgia to Brantley. My mother's apprehensions about the change of trains at Troy were projected to me; I worried, too. The Central of Georgia train sometimes did not wait for the Coast Line. What would a young woman inexperienced in travel and with little money do if left at the depot in the night with six children? I was relieved somewhat when she said

we would continue on to Shady Grove on the Coast Line. My mother had a much-loved uncle there, and she also had other relatives. But the Central of Georgia had not left us; in fact, we had to wait for it for some time.

This wait in the depot leaves with me some important recollections. I was aware that outside the weather was bitter cold. The depot was heated by a great coal heater in the center of the floor. A kindly gentleman whom my mother recognized also was waiting for the Central of Georgia. He indicated that he wanted to help us in any way he could. There were Troy men sitting around the warm room. One told how a boy became rich by using a nickel to buy an egg; then he hatched the egg and raised a hen; and so on to the purchase of a calf which became a cow and then a herd.

When remembering this trip as the oldest of six fatherless children, I cannot resist some meditation on the mysterious turns that life takes. As we waited patiently for the Brantley train, we sat within a few hundred feet of the campus of Troy Normal School. Its new president had been on the job less than three years. What prophet looking at this little group destined to live the next nine months in a three room cabin could predict their future? Who could know that this very shy and frail 11 year old boy in knee pants would in 11 years get off the Central train as a prospective student at this normal school; that he would bring his mother to witness his graduation 15 years later; and that he would return 20 years after that to serve 24 years as president of the institution?

Of course on that cold night we knew nothing of a normal school outside, but my mother recognized the man telling the story in the depot. Many years later I knew he was the father-in-law of the then president of the Normal School.

We were met at the Brantley station by my grandfather Brunson on a neighbor's two-horse wagon. The train arrived there at 8:00 p.m.; the weather was still extremely cold. The family was loaded into the wagon and the journey of five miles through the Christmas weather was made to the neighbor's house. The six months old baby was held by my mother, and the four year old daughter sat in Grandpa's lap and talked excitedly all the way.

Chapter V

A NEW LIFE BEGINS IN 1903

Grandpa Brunson's 160 acre homestead had already been rented out for the next year, 1903. We nevertheless would make a crop of our own by clearing up some new land and renting from neighbors.

The family found temporary quarters in a small two-room log cabin which had been built by Isaac when he had the place in 1895. My grandfather, being a carpenter, soon added another room. It was fun to go out into the woods with him and get boards to cover the roof, and to shape poplar poles for plates and rafters.

The response of neighbors and relatives of the countryside to our coming was generous and kindly. We attended on Sundays the country church two miles away which had been established more than 40 years before and attended by my mother's forebears and relatives. Our reception there was warm and associations very pleasant.

The Year 1903

The things already related were the beginnings of the first year of a new life for me. I was eleven and one-half years old and the oldest of six. Our poverty did not cramp me overly much at this time, although the overall lack of opportunity certainly

made its mark on my development. My grandfather believed in education, although his visions of it were limited. After we were settled in the log cabin, he put those of us who were old enough into school immediately. The school house was at that time on his own homestead. I took my Baldwin's Fourth and Fifth Reader which he had bought me in December 1900 and my Maury's Geography and other books. The teacher, Columbus Dozier, permitted me to use these books.

We proceeded to make a crop in 1903; my grandfather bought one mule and did most of the plowing himself. Our budget was supplemented by my mother's brother, Thomas F. Brunson, who was teaching school at Elba, Alabama, at that time. The amount my uncle sent, ten dollars per month, appears small now but was an immense help to us then. At this time my grandfather took great pride in his school teacher son who was apparently brilliant, well-educated for the time, and best of all a successful teacher.

In the late fall of 1903 we moved from the log cabin to the main house of the homestead which was also a larger log house with supplementary rooms added. On the front of the dwelling were seven or eight large water oak trees whose branches met, providing a complete roof over the front yard. There was, of course, the orchard of a dozen or more large chestnut trees and small orchards of plum, peach, and apple trees. Again we were living where I had first met my grandfather at the age of four. In June I became 12 years of age.

A Rural Life

The purpose here and elsewhere is to take note of those experiences that seem to have had permanent effects on my development. In perspective I believe the next two or three years were the happiest of my boyhood. My grandfather was easy going and kindly. He was a hunter and an outdoor man, and we all hunted together frequently. I had begun to be exceedingly fond of school and did well with books; but I was able to attend but four months of the year. Such schools would now be considered very inadequate. The school books alone, however, opened doors to the outside world. Social life was very simple, centering around the rural church, Cameron's Chapel. Preaching was once a month, Sunday School every Sunday, with "protracted meeting" a week in mid-summer. For two or three years I was not very disturbed by a lack of nice clothes, which did become a cause of unhappiness later on.

My First School Challenge

Grover Cleveland Brown, a young bachelor, was our teacher in the fall of 1906. My teacher was impressed with my capacity to solve intricate problems in advanced arithmetic and to analyze long sentences in advanced English grammar. A couple of years before, I was slightly embarrassed by being excelled in the arithmetic by a teenage contemporary. I now suddenly found myself able to excel all others in both arithmetic and grammar, as well as in other subjects.

This year when the Christmas holidays came, Brown announced his resignation. Such a move on his part was distressing to me. The school trustees decided it would be impractical to seek another teacher before summer, so there would be no more school that winter of 1906-1907.

At this time the principal of the school at Brantley, five miles away, was the famous school man George Thigpen, the man who had taught my uncle Thomas F. Brunson and with whom he taught from 1901 through 1903 at Elba. The idea emerged that I be sent to Thigpen. My love of school struggled with my extreme shyness, but I was puzzled to know how such a venture would be financed. I knew board and room at Brantley were completely out of reach.

A few days later my grandfather found a solution. His brother-in-law Jasper Turner lived two and one-half miles from Brantley. Apparently when approached he agreed to keep me in order to encourage his son Bill, who was my age, to attend school also. I learned later that my uncle Tom Brunson sent 20 dollars and also Uncle Jasper Turner was given a good brood sow. The figure for board and room was five dollars per month. I was aware all along that my grandfather hoped that I would soon be able to take the examination for a teaching certificate and become a teacher at an early age. He also had confidence in Thigpen.

On the morning school opened after the holidays, I gathered my books and, leaving long before daybreak, walked alone the two

and one-half miles to my uncle Jasper Turner's homestead. I recall that when I reached the swamp of Brush Creek after covering two miles, it was still dark. A neighbor, Lige Wallace, had passed me earlier on his way to Brantley riding a mule. I heard his mule's hooves on the small bridge across the creek. I arrived at my uncle's house in time to meet Bill and to walk the other two and one-half miles to the Brantley school. I was assigned to the fifth grade and sat in the homeroom of the principal, George Thigpen.

Some Things About Thigpen's School

The school had grades one through eight. The students in the upper grades were grown young men and women. Some were boarding students. They studied advanced algebra, plane geometry, physics, Caesar, and world history, among other things. My class studied advanced grammar, advanced arithmetic, advanced physiology, American history, geography, and spelling. Thigpen also introduced us to elementary algebra in the fifth grade. He taught this subject himself.

Thigpen maintained the equivalent of military discipline. There was absolutely no talking or whispering during study periods, whether the principal was in or out of the room. We marched single file to other rooms for classes and kept step to the beat of a small drum while going in and out of the building. Thigpen was an excellent teacher of Latin, geometry, higher arithmetic, and other subjects; I watched him teach in our homeroom.

By this time I was 15 years old and was losing the blissful happiness I experienced during the first years with my grandfather. The time had come when I wanted nicer clothes to wear; I was somewhat embarrassed at school by this deficiency. Although I liked Thigpen's school, the spring of 1907 was depressing for me. As expected, I was taken out of school at mid-April to help with the crop. This was disappointing, but I accepted it as fair. It took all of us to make a bare living, and I could not remain in school while the others worked.

Complicating the whole situation were my developing ambitions for myself. I could detect that my visions for my own future, in spite of my youth, extended far beyond my grandfather's world, although he was exceedingly proud of my school performance. For me to secure a teaching certificate by the time I was 17 or 18 would be his pride and joy and the end of my educational career; it would be the top, and good enough. Therefore, I found no one to confide in about my visions of the future, but I fell in with his idea of getting a certificate to teach. I would teach in order to get money for further schooling, not to help the family, as he anticipated.

More Schooling at Home

The crop year of 1907 moved on into summer. Mollie Rogers, an elderly and excellent teacher, was employed to finish out Grover Brown's unfinished term at the local school. Time off from farming activities enabled us to attend six weeks of the eight weeks term. Although the school could challenge me very

little, I did enjoy every hour of it and really suffered mental agonies when we had to miss school to plow a few days and to pull fodder. This short summer session was the last school to be held on this site; the school was to be moved to Rocky Hill, three miles away in the fall of 1907.

The Place of Girls

Because of excessive shyness, the lack of nice clothes, and the limited social life of this community, the opposite sex had figured very little in my life up to this time. By the sixteenth year, however, I had developed a real interest in a school mate I will call Nellie Foster. Because of my timidity, I made no effort to cultivate her friendship, and I am not sure she realized the extent of my fondness, because she was four years younger. Consequently, there was no formal courtship whatever. At any rate, for me Nellie added to the drawing power of the country school because I saw her only at school and at church on Sunday.

In the fall of 1907 I experienced keen distress because there was talk of having no school this winter. A teacher could not be found. The new school building at Rocky Hill would stand empty. Before it was too late, a man with a third grade certificate was found. After crops were harvested, which was about the middle of October, I went to the new school. In spite of the teacher's lack of preparation, I loved and respected him very much. He had been a pupil also in the Thigpen school in the spring of 1907 while I was there.

In perspective I can see that I was not challenged. I was approaching the age at which students graduate from high school; but actually I was not pursuing any high school subjects. My best mental exercises came in advanced arithmetic and grammar. Our teacher found the arithmetic embarrassing. Students slipped around and had me work for them difficult problems the teacher had been unable to solve. I strove, however, not to embarrass him; I considered him a friend who, among a very few, appreciated my ambitions in life. He made it a part of his duties to encourage me. I kept our friendship alive for many years afterwards.

A First Step Toward Teaching

I attended the Rocky Hill school again in the winter of 1908-1909. The teacher was a lovely young woman, Viola King, of Luverne, Alabama. She was assisted part of the term by Ruth Harper, also from the county seat. Miss Harper was assigned to the advanced arithmetic class because she was good in that subject, and because I was in the class as I was told many years later.

My grandfather was still obsessed with the idea that I should try for a license to teach at the earliest possible date. He was obviously influenced by two considerations: my teaching would bring in some cash, and my passing the State Board Examination would appeal immensely to his pride in me.

We followed up the idea that I would take the state examination for a third grade certificate in July 1909. My

grandfather arranged to take me the 12 miles on a buggy to Luverne, the county seat. We arranged to stay a night or two with relatives. His deep interest and parental pride in connection with the undertaking is permanently stamped on my memory. And of course he was filled with satisfaction and pride when a few weeks later I received a Third Grade License from Montgomery, examination grade 85%.

By this time my plans for myself were forming more positively in my mind. I had become ravenously hungry for knowledge and schooling. I could see now that money from teaching would be my only means of going away to school. I believe that my grandfather had little further schooling in mind for me, in spite of his supreme pride in my performance in the local school. A first grade certificate at the most would be the top, and that could be done with some more study in the local schools. My own vision was infinitely beyond this, but we did not even discuss the long view. In fact I had no one to tell about my ambitions.

Chapter VI

I BECOME A SCHOOL TEACHER

With suggestions from my grandfather and the help of my uncle Thomas F. Brunson, I secured a teaching assistant's job with my old teacher of 1906, Grover C. Brown. My uncle and I rode horseback 13 miles to be interviewed by the trustees of the school. A one room school could employ an assistant for three months of the heaviest enrollment provided it averaged 45 students. The pay was $100 for the entire three months, $33.33 per month. I began about November 1, 1909, and taught through November, December, and January. I lived with Mr. Brown's family at $10 per month. Before reporting to work I bought a new suit on time and arrived at Brown's one Sunday afternoon with 18 cents in my pocket. I had a feeling even then that my career had begun, and I made a point of remembering how much money I had.

This first teaching job was not altogether a happy experience. I was untrained, inexperienced, unsophisticated, immature, and shy. I made several serious mistakes, had real trouble with one family, and was unhappy and a little frightened for a period. My experience furnished good evidence that a person should not be allowed to teach young children without training, especially a person only 18 years of age. I must add that I profited by my mistakes in future situations.

Further Schooling

My grandfather would have been pleased to have me use my small earnings to help with certain items on the farm, but I resisted, not realizing how much it hurt him. My eagerness for schooling and need for a higher license accounted for my resistance. Since I was not a high school graduate, the Brantley school was adequate. My grandfather yielded and assisted me in finding a place to live. I was able to attend from February to mid-April after which I went home to help with the crop, as I had done in 1907.

My own plans for the future included taking the state examination again in July 1910 for the Second Grade Certificate and then to secure a school as principal. My grandfather manifested no interest this time, as he had done a year before. I felt then and afterwards that he was really expressing his disappointment at my unwillingness to help some with family expenses. He made no move at all, so I walked the 12 miles on Sunday afternoon and put up at the home of another relative near town. Six weeks afterwards my second grade license was mailed to me from Montgomery.

Other Happenings

In the spring while I was still in school at Brantley, Uncle Thomas Brunson died at a neighbor's house after a spell of illness. He had symptoms of brain hemorrhage. He was still a young man. I knew that my grandfather had in his son's early years been very proud of him as a brilliant pupil under Thigpen and as a very successful school teacher.

About 1905 Uncle Tom decided to leave teaching and prepare himself for a business career. Always indulgent toward his only son, my grandfather arranged to get $500 for him with the help of a mortgage on the farm. Suddenly Uncle Tom took the train for New Mexico where kin folk had migrated many years before. A few months later a message came that he had fallen from a passenger train near New Orleans on his way back to Alabama. My grandfather, of course, boarded a train and went to bring him home. Uncle Tom arrived at our house with a weakened body and a crippled mind.

Whether my uncle fell or was pushed or knocked from the train, we never knew. Several attempts were made to get him back into teaching, but he failed each time to hold the job. Once he attempted with another young man to sell Bibles but finally came home with a load of unsold books. My grandfather had to dispose of them. Because people did not know his condition, they ceased to regard him as a smart, successful school teacher but as "no good."

My reaction to his death was one of sympathy for my grandfather because I had heard how for years he had counted on his only son. My teenage insight told me that this tragedy was the major disappointment of his life. I could not forget either that Uncle Tom had helped me get my teaching job. I was deeply affected by his death.

All of these experiences intensified my determination to move forward on my own, and without the financial help of my

grandfather. Grover Brown, my teacher friend, recommended me for the Salsoda school in the northern part of Crenshaw for the fall of 1910. With my second grade license I would get 55 dollars per month for six months. My private ambition was to teach that year and to go away to school. One could attend a normal school for about 250 dollars per year.

A New Crisis Comes

My school was two miles west of Fullers Cross Roads and 11 miles north of Luverne. In those horse and buggy days this was a long trip. A friend, Ellery Williamson, slightly older than I, insisted on taking me on his buggy. I was to live with one of the trustees, Phillip G. Harbin. I was 19, unsophisticated, still untrained, and a little scared; but I was helped by the courtesy with which I was received by the Harbin family and the neighbors.

Since children were still engaged in harvesting the crops, the first enrollment was less than a dozen pupils. This made my start easier. At the end of the third week I became ill. A good country doctor from Honoraville finally pronounced my illness typhoid fever. I grew rapidly worse, and my home folks were notified by mail. I was quite sick by the time my mother arrived, and I continued to grow worse.

It was afterwards that I gradually learned the full story of my illness. Apparently my case became hopeless, but since I hung on the doctor decided that he might save me if arrangements could be made for a trained nurse. Although I was desperately

ill, I was completely aware of the appearance of the nurse one evening. I was alert enough to observe her take over the task from a half dozen persons in the room; and I heard her invite them all to leave the room. Most of the people in and around the house were country people and had never seen a trained nurse in action. She provoked great curiosity, but was a great relief to all concerned.

Within four weeks the nurse had me ready for the journey home. My mother of course had remained with me, and the nurse rode on the surrey with us to Luverne. No homecoming in my life was ever more significant than this one. Buy my recovery now was rapid and I was able to return to my school after the Christmas holidays.

Because I had not been aware of my condition, it was only gradually that I comprehended the extent of the agony that my mother and grandfather and the rest of my family and friends experienced during my crisis. This story is included here because it changed my plans and my future career. I owed a large doctor's bill and other expenses which I thought I should pay. Future schooling had to be postponed. I finished the year and was elected for another year, 1911-1912. It took all the money I made the second year to pay my debts. I spent the summer of 1911 at home and helped with the crop. The second year at the Salsoda School went by smoothly and uneventfully. I found a new boarding place, attended the country Methodist Church at the "Lodge" near Honoraville, and made a number of life long friends during this

year. These new friends led to my being offered a new school for 1912-1913 at Gravel Hill only three miles from Salsoda. I accepted the Gravel Hill school position. I realized that I was getting older and losing time, but teaching seemed to be the best way to accumulate money enough to get away to school. I was still determined to go.

By this time I was overcoming, to a certain extent, my lack of professional training. My school at Gravel Hill was large, but I had no trouble with the parents or children. In fact I became very popular in the community. The only calamity was a tornado in late fall which damaged the school house to the extent that the year was finished in a nearby church. The trustees and people earnestly urged me to return the next year, but I had to decline. My arrangements were at last complete for going away to school in the fall. A neighboring farmer and relative had offered to supplement my earnings enough to put me through one year. It is scarcely necessary to explain that I chose the normal school at Troy because it was less expensive than a university. Furthermore, it was also doubtful that I could have met the admission requirements of a university.

Chapter VII

AWAY TO SCHOOL THREE YEARS LATE

I was not needed at home this time and almost went to Montgomery to seek a summer job, but the idea was stoutly opposed by my mother. At this moment a local farmer offered me work as a hired hand. By accepting this I saved my money, which might have been wasted on a futile trip to Montgomery. The pay was 15 dollars per month plus room and board; the work hours were from sunrise to sunset.

As the summer moved past, I kept wondering if some event or misfortune would again prevent my getting away to school. I counted the weeks of the long summer because I was actually apprehensive that some hindrance might again emerge.

There was no discussion of my plans with my family. My grandfather made not a single comment about it, although I badly needed assurance and support. In September 1913, my small trunk was lifted from the wagon to the railroad platform by him, but still never a word of approval or disapproval--no comment at all. I boarded the train for a long journey of 30 miles to Troy.

A year before, in the summer of 1912, I had met a young man, Will Revel, from Pike County who was visiting his brother in our neighborhood. Will attended the Troy normal school during 1911-1912 and planned to go back in 1913. It was easy for us to

agree to room together. This young man had been a great help to me in holding my purpose to come to Troy to school. There had been so few persons to advise and encourage me that my connections with Will were very inspirational. On arrival in Troy, I went to our boarding place, which was in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Alonzo Gibson on South Brundidge Street.

On Monday morning, September 2, I went to a certain classroom on the campus to register. There were several of the professors sitting in the room, each with his assigned duties. I remember two of them very clearly. They were Professor of Mathematics, M. D. Pace, and Professor of History, Clarence L. McCartha. I was asked to sit in a chair in front of Professor Pace who promptly asked me if I had a teaching certificate. On my telling him I had a second grade certificate, he announced without elaboration that I would be classified as a sophomore with freshman mathematics and freshman art as backwork. Then Professor McCartha, sitting near, wrote my name very neatly on a list before him on a lectern. Within three minutes I had been admitted to the normal school with three years and not four ahead of me.

The Contemporary Scene at the Time

Although a good description of happenings and conditions in our country and the world would be helpful, only enough will be given to show its influence on me as a person. Ever since the Spanish-American War our country had been waking up. Wealth was accumulating rapidly; new inventions were multiplying; socially,

economically, and politically the country was in ferment. Edison and Ford were creating a revolution. There were of course cross currents and conflicting forces of many kinds. Many issues of economic justice and humanitarianism were raised.

Because my environment was rural and far away from the crossroads of the world, much of this I have mentioned was somewhat remote. My grandfather and his neighbors, however, read their weekly papers and responded with great interest to many of these developments. There is evidence that my aspirations and ambitions were positively influenced by these conditions in the country. Once while I was plowing near the public road the second or third automobile I ever saw passed along. I remember to this day the distinct and unexpected deep thrill I experienced in watching it go by. It signified the existence of an outside exciting world that I was ready and anxious to enter.

The glamorous Theodore Roosevelt had already made his impact on the nation and the spirit he injected into American life and thinking doubtless greatly stimulated certain progress in Alabama during the unusual administration of Braxton Bragg Comer. (What Roosevelt was to the nation, Comer was to the state of Alabama.) The latter fought the railroad monopoly, and the former had his battle with the "malefactors of great wealth." Both were regarded as men of the people. I was a great admirer of both and I believe my grandfather voted for

Roosevelt in 1912, although we had been all along on the side of William Jennings Bryan. My grandfather and his neighbors had for some years followed the Populist and Free Silver line. I, therefore, grew up among people whose dominant political sentiment was populist or ultra democratic; it was anti-Bourbon. These basic concepts I carried to school with me, and they still flavor my socio-political philosophy.

The First Year at Troy

The school year 1913-14 was without a doubt the most satisfactory period of my life up to that time. My study program was heavy and vigorous. In order to classify as a sophomore, it was required that I make up the freshman subjects already mentioned. I, therefore, carried both freshman and sophomore mathematics as well as sophomore physics. My roommate and I put in long hours in the evenings, mainly on physics and mathematics. We went regularly to church on Sundays and occasionally to a picture show on Friday night. Dates with girls and other social activities were not permitted except on Friday and Sunday evenings.

The school had two literary societies, the Gladstone and the Calhoun. My roommate took me into the Gladstone society, which met on Friday night each week. I regarded the activities of this society as an opportunity to improve my proficiency in speaking and making public appearances. Not only had I long desired such proficiency but had felt great need for it in my life and work. Throughout my teenage years I had been burdened

with excessive shyness which hindered me as a country school teacher and in many other ways. The Gladstone society activities helped me greatly; I was elected president of the club for one quarter during my junior year.

Other Extra-Curricular Activities

In December of this school year 1913 I took another examination for a second grade certificate as a preliminary step toward getting a first grade certificate in April, for my previous license was about to expire. In April 1914, while in the third quarter at the Normal, both Will Revel and I took the examination for the first grade license. These examinations required extra study beyond our regular classes. We both passed and each of us had his first grade certificate as a basis for better pay when he taught again.

Looking Ahead From 1913-1914

Finding ways to finance my schooling was still a major problem. My arrangements for the current year were only for that year. In fact, I had to call on my old friend and teacher Grover C. Brown for financial aid to finish the year. He signed a note with me at a Troy bank for thirty dollars. Consequently, I was in considerable debt at the close of the school year.

At that time, 1914, the southern counties in Alabama and west Florida had summer sessions in their country schools; many communities could not get teachers for the winter session. Will Revel and I discussed the possibilities of teaching summer school to aid us in paying our debts. When we arrived in Troy

following the Christmas holidays, Will announced that he had gone to Covington County during the holidays and found himself a summer job. I was jolted by his announcement and felt that I had shown a lack of initiative. Although the day was Sunday, I asked a loan of ten dollars and took the train for Andalusia, Alabama. The next morning I hired a horse and buggy from the livery stable and set out to find a job, having already received a list of the trustees of certain schools that would run in the summer in Covington County. At that time the trustees employed the teachers.

The weather was bitter cold and I did not own an overcoat. But the vehicle was a top buggy and I was able to resist the rigorous weather. The day's drive took me all the way to the Florida line. The lower part of the county was sparsely settled, and at times I drove for miles through uninhabited lonely pine forests. About noon I drove up to a pine plank shack in the forest, the home of a school trustee. Only the trustee's wife, a small, rather typical backwoods woman, was at home. She had just prepared a meal in country style of fresh hog meat--backbone and spare ribs. After putting out feed for my horse, she quietly sat me down to a sumptous country dinner.

I did not wait for the return of the trustee but proceeded on my drive to find the trustee of the next school. About night I reached the home of a substantial farmer and cattle man, U.B. Steele. Steele had a large house and a large family, and was accustomed to taking in sojourners. I was hospitably received and my horse was properly stalled and fed. After supper, because

the weather was still very cold, we all sat around the fireplace in front of the large fire. I overcame my shyness and made proper efforts to entertain in order that my hosts might be impressed. These were country people, pleased at having a visitor, thereby making it easier to communicate. Before leaving the next morning, I had contracted for a four month teaching position to begin in May. I promised to return and board with the Steeles.

In Backwoods School, 1914

The Newell School was in much more of a frontier community than my home environment in Crenshaw. Most parents could scarcely read and write; some were illiterate. The children, not having had regular schooling, were overgrown for the grades they were in, but were eager learners and easily managed. The children did not conform to some classical descriptions of frontier people. I had absolutely no trouble with "discipline." It was a lonely four months, but there were many compensations. The oldest Steele boy, Allen, was about my age and we became friends and attended the numerous Holiness revival meetings about the territory. Incidentally, these church meetings were about the only social activities available. It should be added that we did not participate in the very lively religious exercises.

The most memorable event that summer was the outbreak of World War I. It was most upsetting to me, for I had learned to believe that the world would have no more big wars. All my life

I had heard stories of the Civil War and its terrible toll of lives and property. At any rate I became close to the people and made permanent friends in the community.

Back to Gravel Hill, 1914-1915

Since money was unavailable for my return to normal school, as I desperately wanted, I accepted the teaching assignment at Gravel Hill. The community had replaced its storm-damaged building with a new but unpainted frame school house with an added room for an assistant. An assistant was employed for three months, a distant cousin of mine, Erin Brunson of Luverne, Alabama. Room and board were arranged at the home of Charlie Leverett, a farmer two miles from the school.

To me personally this year was not eventful; I was 23 years old and should have been a sophomore or junior in a standard college. My relations, however, with this large rural community were very harmonious; I added to my permanent friends in the community. Social life was limited to church and participation in a large lodge of the Woodmen of the World located near the site of the school. More than 100 men of my age and older met weekly; the associations were very pleasant and congenial. Girls played no part in my social life; I called upon no young ladies. My interests focused tenaciously on returning to school and pursuing my education. The school term of five and one-half months ended, and I returned home to assist on the farm; no other work was available.

Chapter VIII

A SECOND YEAR AT TROY, 1915-1916

My eagerness for schooling and knowledge crowded out all other motivations. I was able to return to the Normal School in the fall of 1915. I was now a member of the junior class.

For the first time I began to have regular dates with girls on weekends. I usually took a young lady to the Gladstone society on Friday evening and bought two season tickets to the Lyceum course in order to take a young lady to the programs. After a few weeks I settled down to one girl, Helen Dansby, we will call her. She lived in town with a wealthy relative. But I was determined not to assume the responsibilities of marriage because I felt sure this would end my student career. We became tentatively engaged; but my feelings were that it might be a long-time proposition. It turned out that Helen did not believe in long engagements.

The year went by rapidly; I had already established myself in 1913-14, the first year, as a good student. It would require still another year after 1916 to graduate. Financial problems loomed large. Through friendships formed in 1914 in the Steele School community, I secured a summer school position in west Florida just across the state line near the Steele family whom I

visited often during the months that followed. This school term was for six months beginning July 10.

The need for a Florida certificate had made it necessary for me to leave my normal school classes for several days and take a state examination in April at Baker, Florida. The certificate was won and I felt that I could now teach again to pay some debts, but not earn enough to return to Troy. Besides that, a six months school would extend until Christmas and thereby prevent my return to Troy in the fall. This was a long, lonely, agonizing period for me. I was much agitated and my unhappiness reflected itself in my work.

Another Period in the Backwoods

I had spent the first part of the summer of 1916 on the home farm but had to make the journey to my job in Florida by the opening date of school on July 10. I borrowed a small amount of money from the neighboring farmer who had befriended me in 1913. I took the train at Brantley for Laurel Hill, Florida, the nearest town to my school. The spring and summer of 1916 was a period of rains and floods. I was stranded in Andalusia for two or three days; I thought my money would run out. The trains were not running because the rains had washed up miles of track, but I eventually made it to Laurel Hill. While at the Newell School in 1914, I had formed a firm friendship with Joel Davidson, who had become a member of the Florida Legislature and moved to Laurel Hill. My plan was to go to

Davidson's house and get his assistance in getting the eight miles to the home of Julius King, the school trustee of the Rock Springs School. This was another example of how my knack for forming friendships where I taught worked to my advantage.

I found, however, that the Yellow River which had to be crossed was overflowing and impassable and would remain so for several days, even if the rain ceased. A canoe was available at the river, but we had to wade in the water a distance to get the boat. Joel went along with me and we made the crossing, leaving my baggage at his house. We arrived on foot at the typically pioneer homestead of Joel's father and mother in time for the midday meal. In the afternoon a brother of Joel's took me on his buggy to my boarding place, the King home.

The Kings were a farm family of nine in all, the children ranging from ages five to sixteen. They lived two miles from the school. Like most families in this area, they were long time frontier people, hard working and intelligent. Mr. King had the frontier post office at Brick, Florida, and owned a large acreage of timberland. His farming operations were rather primitive, but he made a good living. The whole family worked at carrying on the farm, a store, the post office, and a sawmill. The oldest girl, Roseda King, age 16, arose early and cooked breakfast for ten people, cleaned the kitchen, then prepared herself for school. She was a superior student in the one-room school. It was also her task to get supper for the

household, after which she studied her lessons for the next day. I shall never forget this example of frontier vigor and energy.

When September came, I was anxious to return to Troy. Lack of money and a conscientious regard for my contract kept me through December at the Rock Springs School. The Normal School had a loan fund and had earlier offered me a $100 loan. This was still available; the school authorities were holding it for me. This small amount made it possible for me, with what I earned, to return to Troy in January 1917. Because of certain changes in the curriculum, the faculty agreed that I would be able to get my diploma in May. Some courses I had missed had to be made up. This matter was arranged.

Honors, War, and a Good Job

Without difficulty I resumed my studies, my dates with Miss Dansby, and activities in the Gladstone society. I was chosen for a part as Prospero in Shakespeare's Tempest and as a member of the debate team for the annual contest at Commencement between the Gladstone and the Calhouns. To my surprise I was also chosen as the male first honor graduate and had to prepare a speech for the graduation exercises. The first honor female graduate was Norma Smith of Elmore County. The second honor graduates were Nicholas W. Harrison and Mary Dean. These combined experiences were what I greatly needed to overcome my shyness and lack of experience in public performance. My diploma was awarded May 16, 1917.

The entrance of the United States into the World War I in April was upsetting to all of us, especially the males. Some young men dropped out and went to officer's training camps. Personally I experienced much inner conflict. The normal school had been grooming me for the principalship of one of the new type schools developing that year in Montgomery County, Alabama. This county was to become famous over the nation for its solution of the rural school problem through consolidation. Nothing in my life appealed to me more than this country life program. It was the very thing I had missed as a youth; there had been no high schools within my reach. Furthermore, the salary was good and I needed to pay my debts. I would earn almost four times as much as I had earned before as a teacher. Although many other men students were going into the Army and the draft was hanging over my head, I decided to take the principalship in Montgomery County at Ramer. A school of the new type was being planned for the next year. I would be in on the ground floor of an important and really historic development in education in Alabama.

The president of the Normal School kept me on the campus to teach during the summer quarter following my graduation. Extra teachers were needed because students still came to study for the July state examinations for certificates. I also taught some education courses for a staff member on vacation. I was flattered and honored by this offer although the salary was little more than enough to pay for room and board. This job was

also another consideration in my decision not to volunteer for army service. I am not yet overcome with pride by my performance that summer as a normal school teacher. I was still hindered in my teaching during the summer by shyness and a lack of experience in public appearances. I nevertheless worked hard at it and no one ever seemed to worry over my mistakes except me.

Chapter IX

SOMETHING ABOUT THE NORMAL SCHOOL

Normal schools were great institutions for the people they served, and the one at Troy was among the best. These schools served large numbers who could not go to the universities or pay tuition to enter private colleges. Many came who could not have been admitted to a standard university. The normal schools also performed their central function of preparing teachers for a burgeoning public school system and developing knowledge of proper approaches to the teaching of children. For these reasons I am including a partial appraisal of my normal school experience.

Established in 1887, the school of Troy was one of five normal schools in Alabama at that time. Each had a four year curriculum, but the first two years were on the high school level. A diploma signified completion of two years of college work, although the student may have covered four years of schooling. These institutions were attended by students interested only in academic training, as well as those who planned to teach. In fact, the academic curriculum was solid and strong. Previous to 1913 the Troy Normal offered three foreign languages--French, Latin, and German--and higher mathematics, inclusive of trigonometry, analytics, and calculus.

Standard courses in biology, physics, and chemistry were provided, but there were also courses in geology and astronomy. Although changes were made after 1913, the non-professional program was strong and attracted students who were preparing to enter professions other than teaching.

My response to the faculty was really worshipful. They were men and women who loved learning, although there was only one holder of a doctorate on the campus. Several left me with permanent and profitable impressions. At least three of the men were complete faculties in themselves.

An example of the last statement was Clarence Linden McCartha. Although a teacher of history in 1913, he was proficient in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and French; he claimed that he could "write five languages with equal facility." The five, of course, included English. He had a fine grasp of the history of the western world, teaching the Reformation, the Renaissance, and the history of the English Bill of Rights with very telling effect. My deep personal convictions today on separation of church and state and my interest in what we designate as our Bill of Rights go back to McCartha and to Edward Madison Shackelford, the president of Troy Normal School, who taught a thorough course on the Constitution of the United States to the seniors.

A man of great dignity, a licensed minister, regularly dressed in a black clawhammer suit and black shoes, McCartha was gentle, approachable, and lovable. There were no limits other

than physical strength and time to his willingness to promote learning. As already indicated, all foreign languages were discontinued the year before I entered. A few students had studied one year of Latin previously and were disappointed at not getting Caesar. McCartha volunteered to teach it and a class was organized. Others having had no Latin were also disappointed, so a first year class was started under McCartha. I joined that class and completed a year's study. Professor McCartha also agreed to preside over a YMCA-YWCA group which took up a study of the Negro, using Negro in the South by W. D. Weatherford as a text. Dr. McCartha made the project appropriate for our small group because a study of race relations at that early date was unusual.

Fletcher Jackson Cowart taught all the science, biological and physical, and yet this man was as fond of Shakespeare as he was of Isaac Newton. He liked to write and was the author of our college song.

In conversation with him in a few social situations, I found he was impatient of Biblical literalism even in those long-ago days; his mind was emancipated and colossal, although without the full benefit of a university education. My opinion was that in the person of Fletcher Jackson Cowart was the undeveloped potential of a scholar of the highest order.

Finally, there was Professor Edgar McBryde Wright who taught psychology and education courses. Younger than the others, personable, brilliant, humorous, articulate, and gifted

with repartee, he was a perfect model as a teacher. I looked forward eagerly to meeting his daily classes. Wright was the most gifted orator I have ever heard, although he seldom spoke from the school platform.

Like the others, Wright was kindhearted and personally interested in the students, especially the serious-minded ones. He lent me his aid energetically in finding a good position, even advancing me the railroad fare to go to Montgomery for an interview. For years afterward I called on him for advice on various personal and educational problems. The older students often speculated as to why this gifted young man did not aspire to higher levels in education or other fields; we felt that for him the "sky was the limit." But he spent his life in the Normal School.

Professor Wright's teaching encouraged an interest I already had in the developing field of psychology. I followed it by taking a minor in the field for the B.S. Degree at Peabody College and again for the M.A. Degree there. The subject was included in all my graduate work following the Master's Degree. With a fair chance I might have become a professor of psychology although all subjects interested me at that time.

The most direct and perceptible influence of Professor Wright was upon my own classroom teaching; my classroom performance was never the same after observing him teach for a period of three years.

There were other kindly professors who lent dignity and stability to this common people's school and who were also kind to me. Among these were Matthew Downer Pace, an expert in mathematics, and Miss Sarah Emerson Luther, a relative of the great American essayist, who helped me to correct my poorly written and spoken English. This vigorous teacher claimed to be a relative of Ralph Waldo Emerson, which explained the choice of her middle name.

Although I missed much by attending the Normal School instead of a university, there were considerable compensations.

Chapter X

THE YEAR AS PRINCIPAL OF THE RAMER SCHOOL, 1917-1918

The year at Ramer had both bright and drab phases. Although I went as an honor graduate from Troy Normal School and with the full confidence of sponsors at Troy, I have never been overly proud of that year. My own teaching was highly satisfactory, though I found it necessary to teach full-time in addition to compelling duties as principal; but in many ways my leadership was not adequate. It may be that I was actually overloaded. Within the school itself, things went quite well, but war activities and a campaign to build the first consolidated school at Ramer caused some disruption. Past experience and personal pre-disposition had not prepared me fully for meeting a number of problems. The county superintendent was rather violently autocratic and impatient toward many people, and such demeanor of a top school official proved especially disturbing to me.

At the same time the Army Draft Board was breathing down my neck. Once during the year, I was called for examination by the Crenshaw County Board, but was deferred and sent to a district medical board in Montgomery. The latter board classified me for limited service, largely because the kindly doctors did not want

a school teacher to go to war. They excused themselves by saying that I was underweight for Army services.

Near the end of the year, the Superintendent conferred with me and concluded that the draft would soon get me and that I should not be retained for another year. Since I felt he had other complaints, I was greatly upset over the matter. At the same time I found no opposition at all among the people of the community, and there were expressions of surprise that I was not to return for 1918-1919. I wound up the year in good order and, as always, left some permanent friends in the community. Plans went forward for the building of an ideal country-life, consolidated school at Ramer. Such a school was completed the following year, 1918-1919.

When school was out, I went home temporarily in a very undecided state of mind. I still could volunteer for Army service, go to officers training camp, or stay at home and work on the farm. It happened, however, that the dominating motive of my life won out in this conflict. With a little money in hand, I decided that I would continue my education during the summer at George Peabody College for Teachers at Nashville, Tennessee. I used an argument with my mother and my family that I would put in some time preparing to do clerical work in the Army. I am sure that my mother would have preferred that I stay home on the farm and put in a claim for exemption. In fact, as I have looked back on this period, I am confident my mother was disappointed that I had not taken her and my 15 year old sister

to live with me at Ramer. She had looked forward to my graduation from the Normal School as the time I would take her away from the farm. Instead of this, I had launched out on a program of more schooling, which might postpone such a move indefinitely. She wrote me a letter soon after I arrived at Peabody, the main message of which was her desire to leave the farm. My consciousness of her yearnings came to be a great emotional burden to me as I studied and worked. The problem was eventually resolved and will be described later.

Even though I knew I would wind up in the Army, I registered with the placement office at Peabody College. Within a few days a call came from Superintendent S. R. Butler of Madison County. Mr. Butler wanted a principal for the Madison Station School, which was a combined elementary and high school. He explained that it was really a problem situation and that he needed a good person. The school was to begin in the middle of July and extend through the month of August. I traveled from Nashville to Huntsville by train for an interview with Superintendent Butler and signed a contract to begin work about the middle of July. This arrangement enabled me to complete the first six weeks of the summer quarter at Peabody.

Because of the tales which had been told me about the situation at Madison Station, I went with many misgivings and much uneasiness. Nevertheless, I made a splendid beginning during the first few weeks of the session. Sometime in late August, however, I received a second notice from the Draft Board

in Luverne, Alabama, 200 miles away. I secured a leave of absence from the superintendent immediately and took a train for home. I met the Draft Board at the designated time but was told that one of the draftees desired that his brother accompany him; therefore, only five men were needed instead of the original six. I was informed that I might go back home or go back and take my position again in the school of Madison. After an hour's consideration of the matter, I went back and told the chairman of the board that I preferred to go on to the army at this time. The board, therefore, sent six men instead of five to Camp Greene, Charlotte, North Carolina. This meant that I finally became a volunteer for military service in August 1918.

I must record, however, that this entire summer was a period of uncertainty, tension, and inner conflict on my part. The experience at Peabody had only intensified my intellectual hunger for more schooling on the higher levels. I wandered around time and again on the adjoining campus of Vanderbilt University, walking through their halls of learning and feeling that this was where I should be at my age and with my aims in life. This experience in itself was sufficient to further intensify my dissatisfaction with the situation in which I found myself in the summer of 1918.

My army experiences were not sufficiently significant for comment. The officers asked those who had been school teachers and had other experiences of that kind to volunteer for the work in the headquarters office. I volunteered. This was the kind

of work I had hoped to get when I had decided to go into the army. But I found pretty soon after starting my work in the recruiting camp office that I was not sufficiently trained in business procedures to take charge of the entire office. I do not consider that I was a success in the headquarters office as a clerical worker.

After a spell with influenza during this early period at the camp, I was assigned to the United States Guards, which was a new service within the military whose function was to guard government property over the nation. Soon our company was shipped to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, near Fayetteville, where we would guard the construction activity and property of that military establishment. This was an easy and fairly pleasant military duty. For a while we were the only soldiers in this territory and were very courteously treated by the people in Fayetteville. We were at Fort Bragg when the armistice was signed and the war ended. Pretty soon we were shipped back to Camp Greene at Charlotte. Naturally, the process of demobilization was promptly started at Camp Greene and on January 5, 1919, I was dismissed from the army at Camp Sheridan, Montgomery, Alabama.

These events confirmed the opinion of my family and some of my friends that the war would have been over before I would have been called again had I not volunteered to go into the service in August. Nevertheless, I shall be always glad that I got this much military service during the war.

As I have looked back upon the whole year of 1917-1918, I can see that several decisions might have been better for my career. Had I been a freer and more sophisticated individual I would have gone in May of 1917 to an officers training camp and earned a commission, thereby going in as an officer. The pay would have enabled me to pay my debts and my general army experience would have made a greater contribution to my development. This is mentioned here because I can see in myself certain preoccupations and certain traits which not only postponed my entrance into the army but continued to operate to my disadvantage all along.

The next step, after spending a few days at home, was to go back to Madison and take over my position again. One of the lady teachers had been substituting for me while I was away. I faced some tension after returning because the lady had felt from the beginning that she should have the opportunity to finish out the year. She did not expect me back before the school year was over. This was soon smoothed out, however, and I completed a successful year at Madison Station and was employed for the second year, 1919-1920. During the summer of 1919, I taught a summer school in Covington County. I did not have funds to return to Peabody for the summer session.

Although I do not consider myself as making a perfect record as a principal of the school at Madison Station in 1919-1920, I was sufficiently successful that the superintendent invited me to become the principal of a newly consolidated

school at New Market in the northern part of the county. I had saved enough money to spend the summer of 1920 at Peabody. I was asked to come down to an interview with the trustees concerning Mr. Butler's proposition to send me to New Market as the principal of the school. New Market School was considered the top position in the county, outside the city of Huntsville itself. A new two-story brick building had just been completed and stood on a beautiful site of five acres. New Market was a small and very stable village at the foot of the mountains and had been the site of one of the old academies. The principalship of one of the newly consolidated rural schools had been my ambition. This was an ideal situation.

The chairman of my local board of trustees was Mr. Mose Payne, a store keeper, postmaster, and the best all-round citizen I have ever known. The other members of the board were Mr. Love and Mr. Orman. I lived the first year at the Will Cochran home where I formed life-long friendships. The next two years I lived with the family of the Rev. Robert Adair, an elderly Presbyterian minister, and became very much attached to this family. My position was such that I thought perhaps this would be the time for me to settle for a period. It was near Peabody and the pressure was on again for me to move my mother and my sister to live with me. Although I had my doubts as to whether or not this would be a wise move, I did proceed to make such arrangements during the year. Before the year was up, however, we faced another crisis. Although a fine system of

consolidated schools was being developed, finances were inadequate to insure such ambitious plans. The schools had to be closed at the end of five months in the spring of 1922. To the great and agonizing disappointment of my family, I had to cancel plans to move them 200 miles to north Alabama. I argued with myself that since they had a good home on the farm it would be better for them to remain there a little longer and not run the risk involved in such a move under such circumstances. They were, however, willing to take the risk. Later years proved that my decision was best for all concerned.

I am sure that this is one of the severest disappointments my mother experienced in her hopes that someday I would relieve her of the drudgery of the farm. I began to look around immediately for another position with the idea of leaving this ideal situation in Madison County. I did not succeed in finding another situation; I agreed to return to New Market for a third year. This made my decision of the previous spring look bad because I had indicated to the family that I would not return to New Market. I continued to search for the remainder of that year for a position somewhere else in Alabama. I preferred to come back to the southern part of the state with a better job.

When I visited home during the Christmas of 1922, I placed my name with the placement registry in the Department of Education in Montgomery and soon after the holidays received a notice from W. P. Hodges indicating that there was a vacancy for a superintendent of schools in Tallassee and East Tallassee,

Alabama. Promptly, I received a letter from J. E. Harris who was the chairman of the board and manager of the great Tallassee Mills Textile Company. I wrote to inform him that I would come down and look the situation over when school was out. Back came a straight-forward letter to the effect that if I were interested in the position I would be expected to appear for an interview February 10. I promptly accepted the invitation to visit Tallassee.

Chapter XI

A NEW SITUATION

The decision which finally resulted from this curt invitation was the main turning point in my career. Because of this judgment, I will go into some detail.

The trip from New Market, Alabama, six miles from the Tennessee line, to Tallassee required four train changes at Huntsville, Decatur, Montgomery, and Milstead. Two nights had to be spent on the road each way, thereby extending the trip over four days and four nights.

Had I been superstitious enough to believe in warnings and omens, I might have turned back before reaching Tallassee. In selling me a ticket in Huntsville Thursday night, the agent wrote Tallahassee as my destination. This was detected by a young lady teacher whom I met in the depot and who was curious as to where the principal of the New Market School was going. "I see you are going to Tallahassee," she said. I glanced at the ticket to find that her reading was correct. The agent apologetically sold me another ticket at some smaller cost.

I boarded the train and spent the first night and a portion of the next day in Decatur. Halfway from Decatur to Montgomery, I was seized suddenly with a hard chill which rapidly developed into what might be diagnosed as a case of influenza. I spent a

rather miserable night at the Gay Teague Hotel, but felt it was imperative that I make my appointment the next day. The weather was cold, with some rain. I took the train for Milstead where I would change again with a schedule that would put me in Tallassee by 10:00 a.m. Saturday for my interview.

As I baked myself at the stove in the Milstead depot, I did not see that my conveyance to Tallassee was a street bus on railroad wheels, and thinking it was the section foreman's conveyance for his crew I permitted it to leave me. I had a couple of hours more to wait for the regular passenger train which put me at my destination in the afternoon. Since the Mill Offices closed at noon on Saturday, this made it necessary to meet Mr. J. E. Harris at his home instead of the office at the Mill.

After going over the situation with him, he called the Superintendent of Schools whom I was to succeed to show me around and introduce me to the other members of the two local boards, there being a board of trustees on each side of the Tallapoosa River, one in Tallassee and one in East Tallassee. Through all this I managed to conceal my illness sufficiently to go through with the talks and the tours around town. When these were over, I went to a local boarding house and asked for a warm room to use while waiting for the train back to Montgomery. The lady innkeeper built a fire in the cold room; it soon went out. I toughed it out until the train came and took me back to Montgomery. That night at the Gay Teague Hotel I went to bed

and ordered quantities of hot tea; I never consulted a doctor. By Sunday night I made it to Decatur and on Monday to Huntsville and then to New Market. On Monday afternoon I had recovered sufficiently to go back to school.

Although all the omens were against me on this miserable trip, I soon had a letter from Mr. Harris offering me the position at $600 per year more than I was getting at New Market. He gave me three weeks to make up my mind. I took the three weeks and asked for an extension of time to make my decision.

For some weeks a friend in the Mississippi Delta had been trying to secure for me a splendid job as superintendent of a large, modern consolidated rural or village school at twice the salary I was getting. The Mississippi situation was a grand example of the kind of rural education of which I had become enamored. If I accepted the Tallassee position, I would not only be leaving that type of education, but also would be going into a strictly industrial town. My long rural background and lack of experience with industry made me reluctant to go to an industrial situation. I am sure I harbored some prejudice about a "cotton mill town." In addition to this, the situation at Tallassee left some room for doubt. The year before, the high school had been left off the accredited list because of poor laboratory and library facilities. Several elementary school sections were housed in temporary wooden cottages. The East Tallassee School was housed in requisitioned dwelling houses and a theatre. Although the corporation was generous in support of

schools, I did not sense a positive ambition on the part of the Mill Company head to improve the schools; only the minimum should be aimed at, apparently. In spite of the fact that the Mill Company was making it possible to run elementary schools a full nine months, supplementing teachers' salaries slightly, maintaining buildings, providing heat, light, and janitorial services, I sensed no broad vision for the educational renaissance and the future. Such an attitude did not harmonize with the educational revival going on at that time in the State, of which I had a part. I was reluctant, therefore, to take the position.

The Mississippi deal fell through; no other opportunities appeared on the horizon. In due time I wrote Mr. Harris an acceptance and made an appointment for another conference in May to go over the details of running the schools. It should be apparent by now that I really dealt with only one man, the agent of Tallassee Mills, who was chairman of each of the two boards of trustees.

In May 1923 I went for my second interview with Mr. Harris. It developed that we needed 14 new teachers, three of whom were needed in the high school. The selection of these was my task entirely. Between the interviews with the chairman of the two school boards, I had done some thinking about relationships. My mind was made up firmly to the effect that I would give my opinion on all matters fully and honestly and get it on the record. I would then follow the policies of the chairman if we

differed and he insisted. Following up this idea, I boldly suggested at this conference that salaries of the high school staff be raised thirty-three and one-third percent in order to get better ones. After some mild argument, Mr. Harris agreed.

J. Edward Harris, Himself

The picture will not be clear without some statements about J. E. Harris as a person. It is safe to say that this Agent, as he was called, exemplified the industrial manager at his best. I soon discovered that this man was much more than an enlightened industrial manager. Talks with him in his office and an introduction to his private library at home revealed to me that he possessed great intellectual verve and curiosity. Although he confessed to having finished only the eighth grade at Young Harris School in Georgia, he was better informed than the lower 50 percent of a college faculty. His reading was omnivorous and ranged from Herbert Spencer to the history of the Papacy. He was an admirer of H. L. Menchen but not a disciple; and he possessed all the books of Harry Emerson Fosdick, the famous modernist preacher, which had been published at that time. On looking through his personal library I discovered that most of the books were the types I liked to read. I soon found myself borrowing his books.

In July 1925 the notorious trial of John Scopes for violating the Tennessee law against the teaching of biological evolution came on in Dayton, Tennessee. Mr. Harris developed a

lively interest in this trial and the whole controversy over evolution and the fundamentalist view of the Bible. Both of us began to write contributions to the people's columns of the Montgomery Advertiser defending science and attacking fundamentalism. The editor of the Montgomery Advertiser, Grover C. Hall, Sr., took a keen interest in the controversy and encouraged readers to contribute to the argument by writing short pieces to the editorial page. The debate continued in the Advertiser columns for several months.

As a result of our participation in the debate, both Mr. Harris and I were invited to become members of a small but vigorous intellectual group in Montgomery known as the Unity Club. Editor Hall was a charter member of this group and nominated us. Although we were 36 miles from Montgomery, we decided to accept. The year was 1926. Mr. Harris later moved to Baltimore and had to drop his membership, but I continued as a member through 1952, a span of 26 years. This association proved to be one of the most rewarding and pleasant experiences of the kind in my life.

Another achievement of Editor Hall should be recorded at this point. The Ku Klux Klan was also a major issue during this extremely reactionary period of the 1920's. Our editor club member finally attacked the Klan editorially over a period of many months. As historians know, the Klan was at its height of power during this decade. Hall's attack was effective; he is

still given credit for destroying the Klan in Alabama. In fact, he won the Pulitzer Prize in recognition of his achievement. The Unity Club honored the now famous editor with a gold-headed walking cane.

Chapter XII

OTHER ITEMS ON LIFE IN TALLASSEE

Although the going in this unique town was rough and my mistakes were numerous, the move was most fortunate for me. My professional career moved upward in spite of my errors. My salary was better than other administrators of equal status; the financial support of the school was firm and the corporation continued to supplement the public funds for the operation of the schools.

A little further explanation of the school system and the community is necessary in order to clarify my personal situation as well as my opportunities. The two communities, Tallassee in Elmore County and East Tallassee in Tallapoosa County, together had a population of over 5,000 people, mostly white. Neither town, however, was incorporated, although a small community in the edge of Tallassee was incorporated as Jordanville; but it had no post office. The Tallapoosa River separated Tallassee and East Tallassee; the people of the latter town were almost entirely employees of Tallassee Mills.

Tallassee on the west side was made up largely of employees of Tallassee Mills, but the bankers, merchants, auto dealers, and business and professional people in general made up a considerable portion of the population, many of them serving not

only mill employees but the surrounding farm communities. All these elements offset what some people would designate as the "mill flavor." Like any other town of its size, Tallassee had its women's literary clubs, a Lion's Club, and a Rotary Club, as well as strong churches. But it was an unincorporated town; there was no mayor or city council, and the only police protection were men deputized by the county sheriffs of Elmore and Tallapoosa Counties.

It will be seen, therefore, that both of these rather large schools were legally rural schools of Tallapoosa and Elmore Counties but administered by a superintendent of schools as a small city system. Teachers were on the county payrolls and checks were made out for them by the county authorities. These checks were in turn handed over to the corporation treasurer and a new set of checks was issued by the treasurer of the Mills. The superintendent's salary was paid entirely by the corporation and he apparently was carried on the corporation books as an overseer.

All school buildings, including those owned by the State, were maintained by the engineer who had charge of working crews outside the textile mill property. Two large commodious buildings were furnished and maintained for non-resident teachers, and a matron was employed to direct the cooperative housekeeping. In due time a house was furnished the superintendent with no charge for rent, electricity, water, or telephone.

Some Previous School History of the Community

The Mills at Tallassee were operating prior to 1860 and furnished goods for the Confederate Army. Alabama history will record that early textile towns wanted cheap labor, which included child labor; therefore, they were never staunch supporters of public schools. Child labor laws and compulsory attendance laws came slowly after the turn of the century. For many decades, Tallassee Mills was not an exception; in fact, in the beginning years of the 20th Century a private school was operated for the mill owners and officials but not for the children of the employees. Only the short term rural schools were available for non-employees and children of workers who chose to send their children to school. Consequently, the community had no strong traditions favoring education such as I had found previously in several much smaller communities. Much indeed needed to be done to build a regard for schooling.

Some buildings had been erected which had enhanced the possibilities for improvement before I arrived. When Mr. Harris took over around 1920, he did make some fundamental shifts, some of the results of which have already been set forth. He created the kind of local system already described by combining the schools of East Tallassee and West Tallassee under one administrator. The rather generous financial aids coming from the corporation made this agreeable to local people and the two county boards of education. Although the two sets of rural

school trustees continued to serve as a nominal board of education, the Chairman and Agent of the Mills served as the board for the schools.

Other Relationships

Many arrangements were only gentlemen's agreements. Although both county boards graciously regarded Tallassee as having a city system of schools, much business had to be negotiated with these boards. These negotiations fell to the superintendent of Tallassee schools. I soon found myself dealing with two county superintendents of education and two county boards of education, as well as with Tallassee Mills and the State Department of Education. All these matters were left entirely to me. I was instructed by the agent to run the schools as public schools and not as mill schools in spite of the generous financial help of the company. On this point, the agent differed from the managers of corporations in other localities.

Problems, however, were many, some of which had to be handled with delicacy. For example, there was no high school in East Tallassee or even nearby; East Tallassee and other Tallapoosa County children had to be admitted to Tallassee High School in Elmore County. Tallapoosa County had to agree to transport these students and also agree to appropriate some funds to the Tallassee High School. Such questions made it necessary for the superintendent of the Tallassee schools to attend nearly all the County board meetings of the two counties.

Things happened rapidly in this unique community during the years before the 1929 economic collapse. Many of these happenings bore heavily upon me; indeed, they became more complex and complicated by my own conflicting aims in life. For many years I had committed myself to take my mother to live with me. I also felt an obligation to my youngest sister and a younger brother. The opportunity seemed to have arrived to do something about these matters. My employer and I had agreed in the beginning that my mother would try out as a house mother at the teachers' residence hall. This turned out to be poor judgment on the part of all concerned, and my mother returned to the farm home until later.

These family matters are mentioned only because they are factors in my successes and failures in the carrying out of my major ambitions. My strong sense of obligation to certain members of my family, my desire to succeed in the new job, the thought that I should end my bachelorhood, all conflicted with my overpowering desire to follow knowledge. These were years of great mental and emotional stress.

I resolved the bachelorhood situation by getting married on December 20, 1925, to Miss Annie Pearl Newell of Troy. She was on the staff of the elementary school, having come in the fall of 1924.

Participation in Politics

One might assume that my continuous preoccupation with learning and knowledge and my natural diffidence would preclude

actual participation in political affairs. To a certain extent this is a correct assumption. As indicated previously, however, I was always, from the age of 12 or 13, interested in political affairs. Whether I inherited my grandfather's type of mind or simply reflected his interests from association, I do not pretend to say. Grandfather was without formal schooling, but liked politics, legalistic matters, and discussions of the Bible. The absence of formal piety in his make-up would indicate that his interest in the Holy Book revealed a philosophic mind rather than an orthodox religious mind. His politics would be considered on the liberal side. He was an ardent supporter of Alabama's Governor B. B. Comer and an admirer of Theodore Roosevelt--as was his grandson, even though not a voter.

At any rate, after some hesitation I decided to campaign for Dr. A. F. Harman for the office of State Superintendent of Education in the spring of 1930. I informed his campaign manager Albert Collins that I would look after my home county of Crenshaw. I soon visited the County Superintendent of Education in Crenshaw, T. A. Capps, a long-time friend, but found him highly prejudiced against my candidate and favoring his opponent S. R. Butler in Madison County, my former employer. I nevertheless proceeded to work the county for Dr. Harman. Soon the Superintendent wrote me that he had decided to support my candidate and even offered me some financial support for the campaign.

My personal acquaintance in the southern part of Crenshaw County was rather large and included many relatives. Then the friends I had made as a very young teacher in certain northern communities of the county responded favorably. I thoroughly worked the whole county.

After beginning my canvas of Crenshaw County, my courage grew. I felt that both Tallassee and East Tallassee, large voting precincts, would respond, but I approached these through the key political leaders among the mill workers. Tallassee was the largest voting precinct in Elmore County. The general feeling that Tallassee would go for A. F. Harman would have a great influence on other voters of the county. In this case the Elmore County Superintendent was for my candidate. I nevertheless worked the town and the county.

Because I felt the response of the mill workers was satisfactory, my courage expanded still more. Knowing the many mill workers in Tallassee and East Tallassee were acquainted with other mill workers in the Chattahootchie Valley, I decided to work the valley. Accompanied by a political leader among the Tallassee and East Tallassee mill workers, I visited the four valley mills. Some leaders in the valley had been anti-Alfred E. Smith in the 1928 campaign and pro-Thomas Heflin, who ran as an independent Democrat for the Senate but was also opposed to Smith. It did my cause no harm when it was learned that I had also been anti-Al Smith.

In the end Tallassee went for Harman by a large majority and so did the counties of Elmore, Tallapoosa, and Chambers in which the valley towns are located. These counties plus Crenshaw went far toward giving my candidate the 10,000 majority.

My campaign was in complete harmony with my convictions about education. Dr. Harman as Superintendent of Education in Montgomery County had led in the development of the nationally famous system of rural schools in that county. On the other hand, I experienced some inner conflict. Mr. S. R. Butler had employed me, as heretofore recorded, and after two years had given me the best school in the county, New Market. He was also doing quite well in developing a modern system of rural schools. He restored my job on my return from army service and was a man of genteel character. My original intention was to support him. My tendency to vote for more liberal candidates and the admiration all the younger men held for Harman put me finally into his campaign.

It was evident to me that many overly conservative forces were lining up with Mr. Butler. Many older school men who had been highly successful school administrators in the small towns and held only the first grade certificate were unhappy at developments. My famous old teacher George Thigpen had held only the first grade certificate, but the principals of the rapidly multiplying rural and small town high schools were now required to possess college degrees. Scores of the older men could not qualify. Mr. Butler, himself, in spite of his

sterling qualities, had no degree, but had some college training. These older men in the main supported Mr. Butler as well as some people in the conservative sector. I saw these alignments and early moved into the Harman ranks.

Dr. Harman's nomination concluded my first participation in an important way in a statewide campaign. It naturally had some repercussions locally and otherwise. The local county politicians became aware of me because they thought I had built influence with the mill workers and rural people.

In order not to abuse my independent position as a school administrator, I resolved to keep out of strictly local county politics. This resolution was disregarded when my conviction about school policy led me to further political action. The legislature of 1915 had passed much worthwhile educational legislation under the leadership of William F. Feagin, then State Superintendent of Education. Such legislation had been long advocated by leading school authorities in the state and the nation. Among these laws was an act providing for the election in each county of a Board of Education of five members with overlapping terms. The powers of the Board included the employment of a county superintendent of schools, whose duties and powers were also defined in the law. These school officials, along with other county officers, had been elected by the people.

Such arrangements for local administration of rural schools were regarded by educators as sound and up to date. Nevertheless, local bills were introduced during the succeeding

legislatures to exempt one county after another from the operation of this good law and subject the superintendent to a county-wide election. This was usually promoted by the ever present county court house ring in many of the counties. To nearly all school men these bills were serious backward steps. Such a bill was introduced in the legislature by a representative from Elmore County. It would make the Elmore County superintendency an elective instead of an appointive office. Although this would not directly involve our schools at Tallassee in any negative way, it was violently in opposition to my own ideas of how local schools should be administered in a progressive way.

So strong were my own convictions on that matter that I solicited signatures and succeeded in getting a couple of pages of names to petition against passage of the bill. I presented the petition to Senator Harlan who was also opposed to the principle involved. He took advantage of the petition in hand and moved that the bill be indefinitely postponed. His motion killed the bill. Doubtlessly, other senators were also opposed to this change in the law.

The matter was not ended by this maneuver. The Elmore County representatives next introduced a new bill, a local law, which would give the people the right to vote on the question of how the county superintendent should be chosen. The question, therefore, was submitted to the voters of Elmore County.

The failure to stop the move in the Senate was very disappointing to me, but my convictions were strong so I chose to lead a fight in the county referendum against the elective method. This served to enmesh me further in county politics. The county voted to elect its county superintendent, but Tallassee, the largest precinct in the county, went my way by a very large plurality. One of the smaller precincts of the county also went against the new method of choosing the chief school officer. There was plenty of evidence that the court house ring was disturbed, but my purposes were not then concerned with their politics. I was only concerned with good, up to date, and sound school administration.

Our encumbent superintendent of Elmore County, C. R. Welden, decided, after the adoption of the new method, to run to succeed himself. Persuading myself that the law might be repealed in case we could elect him, I chose to get further involved in county politics by supporting him openly. He lost the election, but our precinct again went three and one-half to one for him. Tallassee was, therefore, the big fish that had not been caught, but this fish had to be caught the next time if the encumbent J. Roy Gantt was to succeed himself four years later. Consequently, my town had power at the county seat with certain new officials, and the new superintendent was able to succeed himself later with the help of the Tallassee precinct.

I have told this story of political activity at some length because it, after all, played an important role in my later advancement. The activities gave me considerable recognition and developed my confidence and techniques of campaigning. Furthermore, I enjoyed the activities just as my grandfather would have.

In 1934 I was again active in the race for the state superintendent of education. The two main candidates were the eminent Dr. John W. Abercrombie who had served as a great statesman in education for 20 or more years. His opponent was J. Albert Keller, a very successful and aggressive county superintendent who had just completed a number of terms as county superintendent in Covington County. In this county he had carried forward the new movement of building new schools and setting up the program of rural education which had begun in the 1920's. I chose to be active in support of Albert Keller. I worked the same communities as I had campaigned in my support of A. F. Harman four years before. I added, however, another county to my territory. I chose to campaign in Madison County where I had worked with Mr. S. R. Butler for five years. I was able to do this because I had continued my contacts with that county after leaving it in 1923. As usual I had made strong life-long friends in two of the large communities in the county. Many of the younger people whom I had taught had become voters and leaders and were ready to help me in my campaign. I

included my home community, of course, but had a little more trouble there than I had experienced in the previous campaign. It happened that a very prominent physician lived in Crenshaw County who was a brother to the eminent Dr. John W. Abercrombie. It was natural that this brother would influence the northern part of the county and that my campaigning in Crenshaw would be more difficult, but in the end the county was carried for J. Albert Keller.

All this would only indicate that by this time I was beginning to enjoy political activity of this kind without any particular motive in mind other than participation itself. I held already one of the best school positions in the State, but I still yearned to pursue education on university campuses. Although I was getting further along in years than most individuals do who desire to earn the Doctor's Degree, I still had this in mind. During the summers of 1933 and 1934, I pursued higher learning at Duke University and achieved almost a year's work above a Master's Degree. This was during the depression years when most people pursuing degrees did not have the money to continue.

Even though the depression was in full swing and we had had at least one bank failure in my town, the Tallassee Mills continued to pay the teachers and to pay my salary; in fact, I was given a substantial raise in that very year. I was, therefore, not expecting to change my position in the very near future.

I did, however, keep closely in touch with the newly elected state superintendent of education J. A. Keller, because I was very much interested in his progressive ideas, especially those concerning the reorganization of the State Department of Education and a standard program for rural schools.

Chapter XIII

MY CAREER TAKES A NEW DIRECTION

Rather suddenly I was called over long distance on a very rainy afternoon to report to Montgomery for a conference with the newly elected state superintendent of education. Braving the weather and bad roads, I drove the 36 miles late in the afternoon to meet Mr. Keller at his residence in Montgomery. He had a proposition to offer me. It was his thinking that he would follow a plan of reorganization similar to the recent Virginia reorganization of its state department of education. The Alabama department had 11 divisions. The superintendent conceived the idea of reducing this to four divisions, each division being described in terms of its function. To illustrate, he would organize such functions as library service, the supervision of elementary education, the supervision of high school education, the certification of the teachers, and all such activities as had to do with instruction into one large division which he would designate as the division of instruction. I would have charge of the new division if I would take it.

I would be expected, however, to resign my position at Tallassee and take one whole semester of study at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, beginning in February of

1935. The most attractive part of the proposition to me was the opportunity to go to a great university to study. After thinking it over for 24 hours, I accepted his proposition.

At this point, I must record that there was a rather subtle hint that the headship of the College of Troy would soon become vacant and that I might possibly be considered for that position. I interpreted this largely as it was intended; that is, to make me more interested in leaving a good position to take another where the salary was not very much larger and live in Montgomery where it would be more expensive. I managed, however, not to forget this subtle hint in later months, and I kept it in mind as I pursued knowledge at Teachers College, Columbia University.

I began immediately after my acceptance to make the arrangements to go to New York where I had never been. Because of the illness, at least the poor health, of my mother and the fact that I had a five year old child, it was decided that my wife and the rest of the family would not go to New York with me but that my wife would secure a teaching position and teach during the semester that I was away. Since I planned to return to Columbia in the summer, the family would accompany me then.

I Go To Columbia University

In preparation for my work in the new division, State Superintendent Keller proposed that my studies at Columbia University include curriculum development in the schools,

teacher education, and supervision. Because of the rude jolt the economic depression had given education, there was much attention being directed toward improving and changing what the schools were doing. The atmosphere was favorable to educational reform. Several states had already begun statewide revisions of the school curricula, involving teachers in large numbers. The new state administration wanted me to look into all those developments. There was no suggestion that I study for a Doctor's Degree.

In spite of the fact that I was receiving a fine salary, I faced a financial problem. The long illness of my mother could be blamed for my situation, but not entirely. The local bankers were my friends, however, and I called upon them. I negotiated a loan of $1,200 at a local bank and arranged to be at Columbia for the spring semester, about February 1, 1935. I felt like a person skating on thin ice, but I could not forego the opportunities ahead as I saw them.

I had never even been north of the Mason and Dixon line. Friends advised me about many things, one of which was to put up at the Kings Crown Hotel on 116th Street until I registered.

I Reach the Campus

I rode the bus to 116th Street, which runs through the center of the University. My first view of the University struck hard the chord of longing in my mind and heart. There was the great library building looming up and covered by a great dome. All round its circular base I could see in large letters

the names of the great minds of past centuries: Socrates, Aristotle, Democritus, Locke, Hume, Tacitus, and dozens of others. Beneath the great dome were the works of the great minds available. The feeling provoked, however, was that these words on the library were really telling me what I had missed in my life--not what was ahead, but what was behind. I was arriving too late because of early disadvantages which had delayed my start. These feelings dissolved and I responded positively when I began my program at Teachers College a few days later.

My position did not demand that I possess a Doctor's Degree; nevertheless, this degree had been one of my goals. I, therefore, made a decision to register for work leading to the Ed.D. degree. I had the good help of Miss Margaret Patterson of Tallassee in finding my way around. I planned to take the preliminary steps toward the doctorate as rapidly as possible. My advanced standing was promptly evaluated and was sufficient to get me through in two semesters, plus an Ed.D. project in lieu of a dissertation.

Before the semester was over, I had chosen a project and appeared before the problems council, which promptly approved my project. I passed the required preliminary written examination, and the faculty agreed that I could do the second semester in the summer session, although they did not like to do this nor did I really want it that way. But my job was waiting and money was a factor. Without giving more details, I will simply record that I completed requirements for the degree, including the

project in 1939. A project was defined as an overt and practical undertaking in the field. The practical enterprise must exemplify the application of sound principles of education in a successful way. Such a project involved an application of research done by others and met the requirements for the Ed.D. degree, while the Ph.D. degree required original research. The project idea appealed to me very strongly.

More About the College and Faculty

Before leaving the account of my experience at Columbia University, I must add something more about the teachers and the program. Some persons believe that Teachers College at Columbia was at its peak in the 1930's.

Most of the men and women who shaped American thought about education and other matters were still there or had just left. John Dewey and Edward L. Thorndike had just departed; Charles A. Beard, the famous historian, had left; but the influence of these men was still felt. E. S. Evenden, Strayer, and Engehardt and most of the giants in school administration were going strong. Harold Rugg, who contributed to many phases of public education, was there, as was John Dewey's most prominent disciple William Heard Kilpatrick.

There were others who were closer to me. Among these was George Counts, whom the super patriots were always chasing, largely because of his book, The Challenge of Soviet Russia. I had several courses with Counts; in addition, he was a member of

one of the famous panels of six professors who dealt with foundations of education. Teachers of other education courses were Florence Stratemeyer in teacher education; Thomas Alexander who had taught courses in supervision of instruction at George Peabody College; and W. C. Bagley who taught the curriculum for the training of teachers. I remembered as I sat under Bagley that 20 years before in the Normal School at Troy I had used his textbook, Classroom Management.

This particular experience in higher education at Columbia was a great challenge to me. The panel assumed that foundations of education reached into the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, psychology, biology, economics, history, political theory, and related fields. The professors chose to marshall content from these disciplines and relate it to the present day conflicts in American culture. Such a procedure, of course, was intended to provoke constructive thinking on the part of the competent students, as well as broaden their scope and deepen their insights into American culture. My preparation for this intellectual experience was excellent. My masters work at Peabody College, and especially my work at Duke University in pure psychology, educational psychology, sociology, and economics furnished a foundation which many other participating graduate students lacked.

At the earliest possible date I appeared before the faculty committee which approved projects for the Ed.D. degree and presented my proposed undertaking. I chose to initiate a

cooperative curriculum revision program for Alabama in which counties and cities would cooperate and teachers themselves would participate. The activities would extend over a period of five years and culminate in improved courses of study.

The semester at Columbia, although a thrilling but belated educational experience of my life, had some parallel disadvantages. The new educational regime in Montgomery was moving forward and I was outside the current of things for four and one-half months. The new state superintendent was proposing some fundamental forward steps in the financing of education. His new director of the Division of Administration and Finance was Edgar Morphet, a brilliant man in his field, who, under the superintendent's direction, was working out a plan to equalize educational opportunity in Alabama. Such a program was presented to the governor and the legislature and was finally enacted into law (although financial support was not provided until later in the administration). Being away during the formation of the forward move was a distinct disadvantage to me, although the details of this advance were not the specific responsibility of my division.

It was after my return from Columbia University that I was placed in charge of the Division of Instruction. I assumed the particular duties of this position with vigor and confidence. I almost immediately began the prepared organization of the state-wide curriculum development program. Among the first steps was the involvement of all the state colleges interested

in the education of teachers. Another important step was to get the voluntary but active support of all county and city supervisors of elementary and high schools and as many superintendents as possible. The response was good enough.

The great concern of educators and of the governor and legislature at the moment was financial support. The schools were almost in a state of collapse. The economic depression was still gripping the nation and the state. The first session of the legislature adjourned, but the educational problems remained.

Some Disillusionments

By the middle of 1935 I was wondering if my move from Tallassee had been wise. Instead of giving relief to education in Alabama, the legislature enacted the Lusk Law which placed a ceiling on state salaries. Persons in my rank were limited to $200 per month--an amount equal to about one-half my previous salary as Superintendent of Schools. Besides the limited salary, I paid house rent now instead of getting a house free of rent, as I had done in Tallassee. On top of this, I had borrowed money to attend Columbia University. Within a few months, however, the annual salary was raised to $3500 for persons of my rank in the Education Department. This was still short of my pay in the old position by several hundred dollars a year. I blamed no one at all for these developments; they were developments over which my supervisors had no control. All grew out of the generally depressed economy.

Politics, educational and otherwise, were shifting and changing all the time. There had been indications all along that my superior officer, the state superintendent, had ambitions to run for governor. It was obvious that if his entire educational program had been given financial support immediately, his political prestige would have been greatly enhanced. The superintendent never discussed his prospective candidacy for governor with me, but did indicate that he wanted me to be a candidate for state superintendent of education to succeed him. This was not in harmony with the original hint that I would go to Troy State Teachers College.

In connection with these developments, another announcement soon came forth. In response to a prod from me, the superintendent admitted that the governor had taken a fancy to Paul Munro, superintendent of schools in Selma and the president of the Alabama Education Association, and wanted the State Board to send him to Troy. This was a disappointment to me in spite of the fact that I held Mr. Munro in high regard. On July 20, 1936, the State Board of Education elected Munro as president, to assume his duties September 1, 1937. Dr. M. D. Pace, Dean of the College, was elected to serve as president until the 1937 date.

This matter was apparently settled permanently, but on 19 , Munro resigned as the appointed president of the Troy College and announced that he would later become a candidate for state superintendent to succeed J. Albert Keller.

At the same time he proceeded to Teachers College, Columbia, to begin his studies for the doctorate. In a short while he announced that he would become superintendent of schools in Columbus, Georgia.

Parties concerned in these maneuvers never enlightened me then or afterwards on what went on behind the scenes. Some time previous to these developments Dr. A. F. Harman, a confidant of the superintendent and a friend of mine, inadvertantly hinted to me that the superintendent was shifting the future roles of Munro and Smith. The former would be the future state superintendent of education and the latter would go to Troy. At the time I took Dr. Harman's remark very lightly because I had not been informed of any of these developments by the superintendent.

The state superintendent and the governor represented the political power at the moment. My interpretation was and is that they concluded that the political interests of the future would be better served if Munro became the candidate for state superintendent of education. He had just completed the first step by serving glamorously as president of the Alabama Education Association. This would open the Troy situation again and rumor soon had it that I was in line for the place. It would appear that Keller still had his eye on the governorship at that time, although he had not put through his program and the legislature had not come to the financial rescue of the schools.

Chapter XIV

MY APPOINTMENT TO TROY

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Finding a successor to head the important Division of Instruction became an immediate task. Several persons were

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McCall's appointment, of course, made it necessary for me to find a person for his place at Troy.

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I continued to promote the Curriculum Development Program from its initiation in 1935 on through 1936 and until my departure for Troy in September of 1937. Dr. McCall, as my successor, continued with my assistance to guide the program to its culmination in some new programs of study.

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My appointment on March 15 to report to Troy on September 1 gave me approximately six months to get ready for the new responsibility. During the interim I continued to direct the Curriculum Development Program throughout the state, to carry on the regular duties of the Division of Instruction, as well as to devote some time to filling the few vacancies then prevailing in the College.

So far as I could tell, the reaction to my appointment among laymen and professional educators was very favorable. I had graduated from the Normal School 20 years before as an honor student, was known to most of the faculty, and as superintendent of schools had employed through the years many graduates of the College. I have always been proud of an editorial which appeared in the Montgomery Advertiser soon after the action of the Board.

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A very important fact was that the new buildings projected on the new campus in 1929 were occupied in September 1930. Although there was much to be done to complete the campus, the College was snugly situated on the new site to which it had been moved seven years before. The buildings were on the southern edge of a 310 acre tract of land.

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Additions and replacements on the staff were influenced considerably by my own ideas as to the function of the College, as well as by other persons who were deeply concerned about the education of teachers.

An important item of attention was the laboratory school located on the campus. The school continued to be considered

essential to the proper training of elementary teachers. Two years previously a principal or director, Miss Daisy Parton, had been placed in the school. The college professor of education, Dr. E. M. Wright, had for reasons of economy been performing this function as a part of his work. Miss Parton had gone to the State Department of Education in Montgomery and a new person had to be found.

Because of the attitudes described, I believed a special effort should be made to find a director with suitable qualifications. Someone suggested Miss Ethleen Daniel, then working in Lexington, Kentucky. Miss Daniel had added a Master's Degree to a period of experience in the famous Parker District Schools in Greenville, South Carolina. E. G. McGehee, who has already been mentioned in this report, accompanied me on an automobile trip to Lexington to interview Miss Daniel. She was offered the place and accepted. An extra grade was added to the school in order to increase the number of children and to demonstrate some junior high school teaching. During the next three years, the little school reached the highest level of effectiveness in its history.

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functions which I had in mind. This was actually the first position of its kind at that time in the colleges of the state.

The employment of what I chose to call a student personnel director was intended to meet certain needs of students not being met.

Points In A Philosophy Of Education

As already stated, some of the actions taken and decisions made during these days were influenced by a certain personal philosophy of my own, achieved through both experience and study. I shall mention two of these.

In general my belief is that education is a developmental process promoted by doing, by deciding, by choosing, and by judging on the part of the learner. Teaching is not a pouring in process, nor learning a process of passive absorption; learning is largely an active response. This is especially true of children. Yet I am a great lover of learning for its own sake; I am an admirer of scholarship.

Connected with this point of view was the knowledge of the type of students in general who attended the school at Troy. These students were reared almost entirely in rural and small towns, many of them thereby lacking the nicer amenities of life and culture. They were characterized by shyness and docility, but also by a desire to move upward. My belief was that these students needed much more than college courses, memory assignments and lectures.

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This point of view determined the establishment of a student personnel program and led to a number of other decisions during my early administrative years at Troy.

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There was also a second reason for beginning a vigorous faculty participation program. As already set forth, the school had passed through some depressing years, and very likely some long periods without much professional excitement. Dividing the teaching staff into committees and subcommittees and leading them into avid discussions of vital problems was a change not objectionable on their part. My positive belief was that the morale of the teaching group would be improved by such professional activities.

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Many persons and agencies must be given credit for the multiplicity of smaller improvements made in spite of economic conditions. For the numerous walks credit must be given to students who were willing to do hard manual labor on a part time basis in order to help finance their schooling, and to a very efficient superintendent of buildings and grounds, Curren A. Farmer.

A limited number of these working students were paid by the National Youth Administration under an emergency federal program to help young people during the depression years, but the College also employed an additional number on work projects.

In a later chapter the story of campus improvements and the buildings added will be given in detail. Since the faculty has already been described as beginning a study of the curriculum, that story will be related next.

Chapter XIV

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How Improvements Were Made

Many persons and agencies must be given credit for the multiplicity of smaller improvements made in spite of economic conditions. For the numerous walks credit must be given to students who were willing to do hard manual labor on a part time basis in order to help finance their schooling, and to a very efficient superintendent of buildings and grounds, Curren A. Farmer.

A limited number of these working students were paid by the National Youth Administration under an emergency federal program to help young people during the depression years, but the College also employed an additional number on work projects.

In a later chapter the story of campus improvements and the buildings added will be given in detail. Since the faculty has already been described as beginning a study of the curriculum, that story will be related next.

AN EXPLANATION

As will be seen, this personal history was not completed. The story ends about the beginning of the year 1938. Thus only forty-eight years of my life are covered.

Although I intended to cover more years, my original motivation was to cover my childhood and youth. I possessed a desire to analyze the experiences of these early years to detect their impact on my adult career. Actually my deeper purpose was to identify the influences in my early years that were helpful and those that were distinctly hindrances. Such an analysis would answer some of my own questions and might also be useful to other students of child life. I have concluded that some of these experiences were helpful, but others were distinctly hindrances in my adult life.

There were also diversions following retirement which got in the way of my completion of the biography. Among these was my conviction that I should write up my twenty-four years as president of the college at Troy, because my predecessor had written a first hand account of the first fifty years of Troy State Teachers College. This task I undertook and finished in 1970. The book accounts in part for another ten years following 1961. Perhaps this partially justifies my failure to add more to the biography.